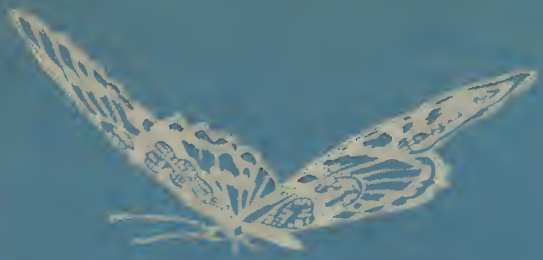
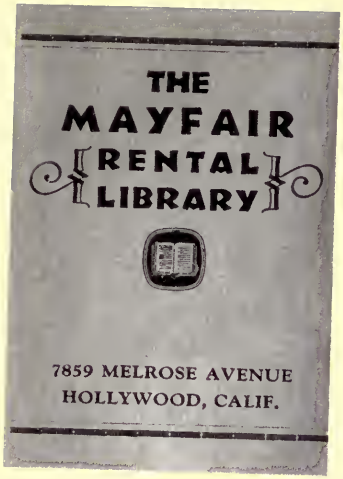


THE MISDEMEANORS of NANCY

by

ELEANOR HOYT



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The Misdemeanors of Nancy

"A vision in a soft, shimmering pink gown and hood stood in the doorway"

The Misdemeanors of Nancy

By

Eleanor Hoyt

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THE DISREPUTABLE YOUNG PERSON

THE DISREPUTABLE YOUNG PERSON

AN INTRODUCTION

ONE could hardly approve of her. It was easy to adore her. If the Fates had offered Nancy the choice of being approved or adored, she would have chosen the latter, without an instant's hesitation; so, on the whole, matters were satisfactorily arranged.

Nancy's parents had their moments of protest. The young woman was indulgent yet firm with the malcontents. She pointed out to them that, after all, she was the victim of circumstances for which they were responsible.

"When a Kentucky belle marries a New Hampshire lawyer, there are rocks ahead for coming generations," she reasoned, having settled herself upon the arm of her father's chair and rumpled his gray hair into hopeless untidiness.

"Given Kentucky impulses and a New Hampshire conscience, what can one do? You really should n't expect much of me.

"Now, if Daddy had married one of his neighbors, I would be frostily sewing flannels for missionary boxes. If the little mother had married any one of the six men to whom she was engaged during her first season in society, I would have caught fire and flamed into matrimony before I was twenty. As it is my New Hampshire head keeps my Kentucky heart from running away with me; and my Kentucky heart keeps my New Hampshire head from reasoning me into a marriage for revenue only.

"I wash my hands of it. You two dear things are responsible. I 'm tremendously sorry I can't marry ineligibility to please myself or eligibility to please you,—but there you are.

"Daddy, do you know you are altogether beautiful with a fringe?"

The discussion ended with Nancy's being kissed. Discussions in which Nancy takes part often end that way. Frequently they begin with the same formula.

A DUMB-WAITER DRAMA

I

A DUMB-WAITER DRAMA

IT was while Nancy's family were in Florida that she and Priscilla shared lodgings. They went the dreary round of boarding-houses. Each new hall bedroom was an additional sinker tied to the spirits of the two girls. Priscilla grew morbid and found it necessary to take a nerve tonic. Even Nancy, the irrepressible, lost her appetite and her gayety and became embittered. The sight of any of the many bachelor apartment houses scattered through the town moved her to impotent rage.

"My disposition is ruined," she confessed dismally; "when I pass one of those bachelor apartment places where unworthy men can get all the joys of paradise for $50 a month, I 'm like a mad dog who sees water. I positively froth at the mouth. I 'll marry the first bachelor who asks me, for the sake of getting even with him. As if petticoats were n't curse enough without adding hall bedrooms to woman's lot!"

Just at the critical moment when suicide, matrimony, and boarding-house existence were the courses being weighed in the minds of the forlorn young women, the patron saint of bachelor girls, who works over hours and must doze at times, woke up. He is a saint of expedients. He has to be. He could n't hold down his job or his halo if he were not.

He inspired a young married couple who owned a three-room apartment on a quiet downtown street with a wild longing for European travel. Then he led the wife and Nancy, who were old friends, into the shopping district and threw them into each other's arms at a bargain counter. They told their life stories from the time of their last meeting two months before up to date.

They had seats at the counter, so the women who were standing eight deep and struggling for a chance at the saleswoman did n't bother them, and they could chat lazily.

The young wife confided her plans for a European trip. Nancy sighed forth the story of her quest of the unattainable. Then they tumbled the remnants on the counter until the patron saint brought the young

wife up with a round turn. He could n't waste time. She gave the little cackle that in certain feminine types always accompanies the laying of an idea.

"Oh my dear, why not?"

"Then, again, why?—and what?" asked Nancy, flippantly.

"Oh, it 's the loveliest idea!"

"Is n't it just," assented Nancy rapturously.

"There 's no reason why you should n't."

"None in the world," agreed Nancy.

"Then it 's all settled?"

"It is," admitted Nancy, with a suggestion of sarcasm; "and now, since it is all settled, would you mind telling me what it is."

The young wife looked surprised.

"Why, don't you understand? Can't you guess?"

"I could," asserted Nancy, "but I never guess more than three things before luncheon and I 've had my three."

"You and Priscilla will just take our rooms. We 'd have to pay for them, anyway, and you can pay a little part of the rent for the use of the furniture and things. It 's the dearest little place, and you 'll have

such a lark! Come right down and see about things and tell Jack."

"Maybe Jack would n't like it."

The young wife's eyebrows surged toward her pompadour.

"Now, really, my dear, do you suppose I have n't started him better than that?"

The two women made a flying wedge through the bargain fiends and scurried downtown to a fine old house which had been remodelled for a use unknown to New York until a few years ago. The suites of three, four, or five rooms are artistic to a degree unknown in the ordinary flat; there is a dining-room with each suite, but no kitchen. Not even a trace of culinary apparatus is in sight.

All meals are cooked in the kitchen in the basement and sent up on dumb-waiters to the different apartments, where the maid employed by the owner of the rooms serves the meal, and then piles the dishes on the dumb-waiter and sends them down to the kitchen to be washed and put away.

It is privacy and home life made easy, a deification of the English lodging-house system to which, in its humbler form, New York has never taken kindly.

Jack was complaisant to a degree that spoke volumes for his wife's discipline. The proprietor of the house was interviewed and went down before Nancy's *beaux yeux*.

The meals were the only stumbling-block. They were elaborate. The menus were wonderfully and fearfully constructed by an expensive French chef, and the meals, like the chef, came high.

"We can arrange it," said the affable landlord, moved by Nancy's disappointed upper lip. "It is exceptional. It must not be told. I have never allowed such an arrangement, but this is for a short time, and I like to accommodate my tenants."

"And Nancy is so infernally pretty," added Jack sotto voce.

"Can you put up with a continental breakfast?" asked the landlord.

Nancy could.

"Coffee, rolls, butter, eggs. That will do, then. Our regular breakfast has six courses. Now about luncheon." We have also a six-course luncheon.

"Two courses would do for us," said Nancy, humbly.

"To be sure. The chef can send up the menu early, and you can choose. Then,

from the nine-course dinner, you might choose three courses. You could live so?"

Nancy thought that she might drag out a starving existence on that provision. Then she beamed upon the benevolent landlord, and the patron saint, feeling that he had done his duty, pulled his halo on firmly and started off to attend to the other bachelor girls. He had provided Nancy with the time and the place and the man. He knew she could manage the rest.

So the young married couple moved out, and Nancy and Priscilla moved in; and this is really where the story begins, though a long preamble seemed a necessary evil.

The girls had no maid. They could n't afford one, and they felt themselves strong enough to take the dishes from the dumb-waiter to the table. When this arrangement was noised abroad the hall boy assumed a condescending air, and the general house servants displayed a sort of haughty curiosity if they met the new tenants in the hall. Nancy was amused, but indignant.

"I must reason with that hall-boy," she said sweetly. "I don't like his manner."

She reasoned. Inside of a week, the hall-boy courted pneumonia, on the front steps,

watching for her to come home; and when she hove in sight, darted inside the door and looked as if he had swallowed all his buttons and were choking on them.

During the first few days, the meals came up in rather higgledy-piggledy fashion. A severe-faced Irish girl put them on the dumb-waiter and jerked them up to the second floor, in an emphatic way that spoke volumes for her opinion of young women who waited upon themselves. But, on the third evening, the girls heard a masculine voice calling up through the dumb-waiter to the maid on the third floor.

"You do not come down zis day," said the reproachful voice, in accents French. "You are offend? Yes? and I am *désolé*."

Nancy dropped her soup-spoon and listened shamelessly.

"But it was nossing. I did not mean to offend," the voice said.

"Take shame to yersilf for kissin' a girl without sayin' by your leave."

"It would be a more shame to ask for ze leave, is it not?"

Nancy arose with a gleam of battle in her eye.

"Priscilla," she said sternly, "this is where

I reason with the chef. Something tells me that he will be amenable to reason, if rightly approached."

A moment later the up-gazing Frenchman saw between him and the offended Irish maid a vision that made even his white cap quiver. A fluff of golden-brown hair, sparkling gray eyes, flushed cheeks, dimples, a smile that would thaw a Teuton—what could a Frenchman do?

"You are the chef?" asked a voice that would stir the soul of a clam.

"Yes, mademoiselle," stammered the dazed Frenchman.

If that voice had told him he was a Hottentot chieftain he would have admitted the soft impeachment without a protest.

"I've wanted so much to speak to you," cooed the vision. "You see I am one of the young ladies who have taken Mrs. Blank's apartment for a little while. We are just doing it for fun while our people are away, and we have n't any maid and we've arranged to take only a part of the menu, but things have n't been quite nice, you know."

"Ah, mademoiselle!" with anguish in the tone.

"Oh, it is n't your fault. Things are

deliciously cooked. That pâte last night! Such another was never made outside of Paris; but you see things come up cold, and they are n't daintily served, and the menu is n't sent up for us to choose from. I thought you would make it all right, and now that I 've seen you, I 'm quite sure you will."

"But, mademoiselle, eet ees my privilege. I am unhappy to the heart zat it has so happened. I go to change it all. Alphonse shall arrange. I shall overlook eet myself."

"You are so very good," murmured the vision.

"Mademoiselle, it is you who are good, to gif me ze happiness to serve you."

A whistle blew in the kitchen. The white-capped head disappeared. Nancy went back to her soup.

"Priscilla," she said, meditatively, "something tells me that the next course will be hot."

It was.

The next morning when Nancy whistled down for breakfast the chef answered.

"Good-morning, mademoiselle. You have slept well, ees eet not? I will send ze déjeuner at once."

The breakfast-tray came up a thing of beauty. Toast and muffins came with the rolls, the eggs were apotheosized in a mushroom omelet, the cream pitcher had multiplied its size by two, and a pot of marmalade made its début.

"Priscilla," said Nancy, as she eyed the tray, "reason is a wonderful thing, and it is unquestionably better developed in the masculine mind than in the feminine. I have always noticed that, in my experience. We women have intuition, but when I must appeal to reason give me a man to deal with. Did you ever study psychology, Priscilla? Experimental psychology should be a part of every girl's education. It broadens her scope. It will stand by her when French and music fail her."

She moved her napkin impressively. Priscilla looked mildly speculative. When Nancy becomes didactic she is most edifying.

"Still," she added musingly, a few moments later, "there may be emergencies in life in which a knowledge of colloquial French is not to be despised."

That night when she looked down at the impressionable chef and asked for the menu,

she spoke to him in his own language, spoke soft Parisian French, with only an adorable little struggle over the r's to hint at her being an alien.

"*Quelle ange*," murmured the demoralized Frenchman.

"It is always well, Priscilla, to give a fellow human being simple pleasure when one can," said Nancy later. "And then, presumably, the Irish girls at the other dumb-waiter slides do not understand the language of la belle France. What a boon education is to woman! Shall we have oysters and fish and roast, or soup and entrée and dessert, or salad and roast and fruit? This rule of three is crazing my poor brain."

The dinner came up. It began with oysters and when the roast had been discussed the girls proceeded to clear up the table. The waiter whistle sounded. Nancy opened the slide. A silver dish of chestnut and lettuce salad confronted her.

"Eet ees after ze façon of ze Café Anglais," said a voice from the lower regions.

"Delicious!" gushed Nancy.

But when the salad was finished there came another whistle, and a wonderful strawberry cream dawned upon the second

floor back. The girls looked at each other. There was guilt on Nancy's countenance. Priscilla wore a severe expression.

"You don't suppose he is going to keep it up, do you?" demanded Priscilla, sternly.

"Oh, no, of course not. He's merely trying to make up for past indignities and save the reputation of the kitchen," said Nancy, with a cheerful innocence that seemed almost too perfect.

Then Priscilla, in her turn, became didactic.

"Moderation, my dear young friend, is the secret of happy living," she said.

"Possibly," admitted Nancy. "One lives longer, but one does n't live so well."

Didactics invariably ended in unseemly mirth in the second floor back.

The next morning two beautiful fresh pink roses adorned the breakfast tray. No one mentioned them. That night an eight-course dinner came up. The next day the same thing happened.

"It must be stopped," said Priscilla. "I feel as if I had the landlord's spoons in my pocket."

"But you would n't hurt the poor chef's feelings," urged Nancy, gently.

"You brought this thing on; you must stop it."

Nancy looked hurt.

"Go to that dumb-waiter and explain to the man that we appreciate his kindness, but we can't eat what we do not pay for," said Priscilla.

When Priscilla is determined she is very determined.

"What I like about you is your fine Anglo-Saxon directness," said Nancy, enthusiastically, but she went to the dumb-waiter and talked ten minutes in French.

Priscilla, who does n't understand French, watched her suspiciously.

"Well," she demanded.

"He was deeply hurt, desolated. He feared we thought him presuming. I relieved his mind. I told him what you said, translated into polite French. He quite understood. Our delicacy of feeling touched him to the heart. We must rest tranquil. He will arrange everything. He will put everything on an unimpeachable basis, and we will still live like Lucullus and his confrères."

"Nancy!"—distrustfully.

Nancy dropped her bantering tone.

"Now, look here, my dear. I 'm no more fond of downright theft than you are. I dislike this thing as much as you do. I will not have it, and I made the chef understand that; but I did n't heave a brick at him or hit him with an axe.

"I have n't the faintest idea what he means by his arrangement, and I will not allow anything that is n't square, and if you look at me like an accusing angel for one more minute I 'll throw the coffee pot at you—there!"

The conversation dropped.

The breakfast was inoffensive, luncheon ditto. Dinner was monumental. The girls looked at it aghast. Some one tapped at their door. Nancy answered and confronted a smiling and benevolent landlord. She was the picture of detected crime, and inwardly gave thanks that only one course at a time was in evidence on the table.

"I 've been talking to the chef," said the landlord, with the air of a fat and bald fairy godfather. "He tells me he sent up a bit of cream with your dinner last night, and you were dreadfully distressed about the thing. Now I have given positive orders" (increased benevolence radiating from

"Nancy looked hurt"

every pore) "that whenever he has more of anything nice than will be used by the other diners he shall just send that course up with your things."

"So awfully good of you," smiled Nancy, "but I don't feel right about it."

The landlord waved her off.

"It is all settled. The chef understands, and you must leave the matter with him."

He disappeared in an aureole of self-satisfaction.

Nancy sat down on the nearest chair.

"France is the country of diplomacy," she said, with conviction.

Just then the chef sent up a huge pastry heart, full of mocha cream.

"Eet ees all arrange. Yes," he said, cheerfully. "I shall send of what ees too much. I am command. Monsieur he sink eet ees all his idea to himself. Le voila.

"He has been most imperatif, yes. He would not zat I should object. C'est dommage, mais—Eet ees necessaire zat I do what I am told, mademoiselle. You would not like zat I am deescharge for not to obey. Eh, bien! Eet is settle."

"Now, Priscilla, what can we do?" asked Nancy.

"It 's worse than theft now. It 's conspiracy," groaned Priscilla.

"I 've done my best to be honest. I call the gods to witness that I was willing to give up even mocha cream for the sake of moral integrity," protested Nancy.

So the girls lived upon the fat of the land. There was apparently too much of everything in the kitchen. Alphonse, the cook's assistant, took on either reflected or spontaneous fervor. The cuisine circled around the second floor back.

"I shall have a guest for dinner to-night," Nancy would announce down the dumb-waiter.

"Allons! you shall be proud, mademoiselle."

And she was. The man who came often used to make out request programmes and send them in, in advance. Nancy had but to mention them to the chef. When she came in late from the theatre, the hall-boy said mysteriously:

"Miss, the chef says, will you look on the dumb-waiter before you go to bed."

A tray of lettuce sandwiches, and cold lobster and celery mayonnaise and little birds in aspic was there.

At afternoon tea time a whistle from the kitchen sounded.

"Ze tartines for ze tea. Eet ees good so, mademoiselle," said the chef.

"Thank Heaven we shall be here only six weeks," sighed Priscilla of the Puritan conscience. "I shall never feel honest again, as long as I live."

The six weeks went by quickly, and Nancy's family was due on Monday. On Sunday she told the amiable landlord that she would be leaving the next day. He had been somewhat prepared for the blow, and bore up nobly; but when Nancy took the Sunday luncheon from the waiter, an agitated face appeared at the kitchen slide.

"Mademoiselle," said the chef, in trembling French. "I hear something. I hear that you leave to-morrow. It is not so? No? It is? Mon Dieu!"

He vanished. Nancy went back to the sitting-room, looking thoughtful.

"Priscilla," she said with a little furrow between her brows, "what was that exceedingly original and instructive remark of yours about moderation?"

Priscilla went out for tea. Nancy sat

reading by a shaded lamp. The hall-boy brought her a card.

"Monsieur François Henri Veuilliquez," she read in a puzzled way. "Show the gentleman in," she said.

Then she looked at the card some more, with an evident effort to corral a fugitive memory. She had lived in Paris for three years. Had she known this Frenchman there, or had some Parisian friend given him a card of introduction to her, or ——

The door opened. A tall, handsome Frenchman, in an irreproachable frock coat, stood bowing to her. Distinguished, immaculate, graceful, but visibly agitated, he faced her. There was something strangely familiar about him. She must have known him in Paris. How awkward that she should have forgotten. She smiled a welcome.

"Monsieur ——?"

"Mademoiselle ——"

The voice was more familiar than the face. Nancy looked dazed.

"Mademoiselle ——"

Then a torrent of French broke loose and surged through the room. It washed Nancy off her feet, and she sat down limply.

"It is a liberty. You will turn me away,

but it is desperate. You go. I see you no more. It is to die. My heart is torn. I must speak."

The excited Frenchman was on his knees before her, raving, pleading, sobbing. She looked helplessly toward the bell by the door.

Mad, evidently, quite mad, and there was no one she could call. She must humor him —humor him and escape. Heavens, what nonsense he talked; but he was gentle, in spite of his mania. He did not touch her. He only raved of her hair and her eyes and her voice and his adoration.

Where had she seen him? Where had she known him? How had it happened that he should come to her? She was desperately frightened, but she pulled herself together and smiled at him sweetly.

"But I cannot answer all this now," she said, with Machiavellian strategy. "It is so sudden; you must be patient. You will go away now and come again, and I will talk to you then."

The kneeling man seized her hand and covered it with kisses.

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! You give me hope. You are not insulted. You realize

that I am a man—a man and a Frenchman. Rank! What is that? Moi! I am of Rousseau a disciple. It is but to love. That levels all. You — you see the man under the cook."

"The cook!"

Nancy gave one great gasp of comprehension. The handsome, impassioned face, with its dapper mustache and its imperial, framed itself in white linen and stood out against a background of dumb-waiter walls.

Gracious Heavens! The chef! Her sins had found her out — and she had told him to come again and talk love to her! And now, what could she say except the truth? She would tell him she had thought him a lunatic and that she had n't meant to encourage him, and it would be so hard on him.

Nancy hates making a man unhappy, whether he 's a chef or a millionaire. Still she could n't accept the chef to save his feelings. She must say something.

There was a rap on the door. The patron saint had wakened once more. The Frenchman sprang to his feet. Nancy's heart leaped for joy. She recognized the knock.

"Come," she said faintly, and the man who came often stepped into the room.

He felt the electricity in the air and stopped short, looking at the flushed and nervous Frenchman with that chilly aggressiveness which covers the Anglo-Saxon like a garment when he does not understand. Nancy shot one beseeching, imploring glance at him. Then she rose to the occasion.

"Bobby, this is Monsieur Veuillequez. He has been a very good friend to Priscilla and me. You will want to thank him. Monsieur Veuillequez, this is Mr. Stanton, my fiancé."

Bobby gave one startled gasp, then looked at Nancy and shut his mouth firmly.

The Frenchman bowed low. His face was white and his lips trembled under the dapper mustache, but his manner was intact.

"Monsieur is to be congratulated. It is an honor even to be called mademoiselle's friend. I have the honor to wish you both good-day."

He was retiring in good order. Nancy looked at him doubtfully, then suddenly reached out her hand.

"Good-by, monsieur. I am very grateful to you. Forgive me. I did not dream."

He bent and kissed her hand with a

manner that would have done credit to a marquis of the old régime.

"It was I who dreamed, mademoiselle."

The door closed behind him. She turned to an irate Bobby, who bristled with a demand for explanation.

"Pardon my taking liberties with you. Bobby. I wont carry it any further and insist upon being really engaged to you, and he will not spread the report. He's not in our set."

"Who is the beggar? If he was annoying you, I'll break ——"

"Oh, no, you wont break every bone in his body. You'll never see him again. He's our chef."

The man uttered an exclamation that sounded unfit for polite society, but Nancy created a diversion by dropping down upon the divan and beginning to cry hysterically.

"I'm a beast," she sobbed, "a wretched little beast, and I'll never smile at a man again so long as I live."

But she did.

That night, as Priscilla was dozing sleepward, Nancy shook her into attention.

"Priscilla," she said resolutely, "I shall never be happy until I've had a French

count making love to me. If an ordinary Frenchman can do the thing so magnificently, what, oh what, would the nobility achieve!"

A LESSON IN DEMOCRACY

II

A LESSON IN DEMOCRACY

"HE 's wild to meet you," bubbled young Mrs. Winston.

Nancy elevated her chin slightly, and looked volumes of indifference.

"English, you said?"

"Yes," replied the matron rapturously.

"And titled?"

"Oh, yes. Of course, he 's only a Baronet, but it 's a very good old family."

"I don't care to meet him."

Nancy's tone was conclusive.

Mrs. Winston gasped.

"Why, Nancy? Refuse to meet a new man?"

"My dear, I 've borne much at the hands of my married friends. I 've helped them entertain cowboys and Indians and anarchists and poets and Bostonians. Whenever there has been a San Juan to storm I 've been called in and have led the charge. But I must draw the line somewhere. In Eng-

land I will do as the English do. I will flirt with Englishmen because there are no other men available—and, incidentally, because the English girls don't like it; but, in a land literally flowing with masculine milk and honey, to deliberately devote an evening to an Englishman? Never!"

"But, my dear, he 's perfectly lovely."

"Elizabeth, I know that you 've already married me to the Baronet, have been invited to visit at the castle (has he a castle?), and are having tea on the terrace, beyond the yew walk. But, my dear, you 've got to tumble your luggage out of that pink guest-chamber and give up your Hunt Ball. I know those Englishmen. I 've spent two summers over there. I 've scoured the country for the brilliant, fascinating Englishmen of the novels, and the Englishwomen with French clothes and morals. I did n't find either. The Englishman makes love badly, and the Englishwoman dresses badly. Neither can be saved. I won't meet your lion. I 'm positive he could n't roar."

"But, Nancy, I promised him."

"The moral of that is, don't count your Anglomania before it is hatched."

"Nancy, there are times when—well, my

dear, when you are actually a wee bit vulgar."

"I should hope so," said Nancy cheerfully.

The bell rang violently. The cook appeared at the library door, looking like a large wine-jelly in imminent danger of collapse.

"Shure it 's a letther the bye 's afther bringin'," she explained.

Mrs. Winston took the letter and opened it. Horror wrote itself upon every line of her pretty face, and her fluffy pompadour visibly rose.

"It 's from John. He 's bringing him tonight."

"The Baronet?"

"Yes,"

"Well, that 's good. If I were you I 'd want to have it over."

"But Mary has gone. I 've no maid. Oh, what an idiot John is!"

"Can't Nora cook and serve too?"

"Serve?" Mrs. Winston's voice expressed the scorn of scorns. "Serve! Look at her. She 'd fill the dining-room and ooze out at the windows. There 'd be no room for us. She 'd stick between the chairs and the wall. She never had on a

pair of corsets in her life. She can't breathe with her sleeves rolled down. She 'd drop everything she touched. She does n't know a carafe from a giraffe. She wheezes like a grampus. Would n't she be a treat to a man who is used to flunkies behind all the chairs ?"

"She would," agreed Nancy fervently.

"No ; I 'll have to go and get somebody. But there 's no time. Oh, if I had John here ! My dear, don't ever marry. Even the best men are absolutely devoid of consideration for their wives. Thank heaven the dinner is all right. I ordered what I knew you 'd like. I 'll change the wines. There 's never any use wasting good wine on a woman. But the maid ! Oh, Nancy, what *shall* I do ?"

The woman who was to entertain a live Baronet fell back among the sofa's pillows and groaned aloud.

"Well, it *is* a pity to be married to a brute," said Nancy feelingly.

That brought her friend to a sitting posture.

"I 'd like to know what you mean by that. John is the most considerate man in the world. It 's odd if a man can't invite a

friend to his own house. How could you expect a man to remember domestic details in the midst of all his rush of business?"

"Exactly," drawled Nancy, with a provoking grin, and the young wife looked foolish.

Suddenly Nancy's eyes began to twinkle and her dimples became aggressive.

"Elizabeth, I 'll meet your Englishman."

"But that won't help me in the servant dilemma."

"Just won't it! Elizabeth Winston, I shall serve that dinner!"

"B-b-but—" stammered the hostess.

"But me no buts. I 'm adorable in a cap and apron. It has been the regret of my life that I could n't adopt them for ordinary house-wear. I 've an outfit that I used at the cooking-class. It was such a howling success that I used to spoil my puddings by weeping salt tears into them because the class was n't coeducational."

The girl's enthusiam was contagious. Her friend was beginning to take a more cheerful view of life.

"But, Nancy, do you know how?"

"Do I know how, is it? Faith, I 'm the

finest ever. I 'm warranted smooth-running, noiseless, tidy, honest—and no followers. They all walk with me."

The new maid executed a few steps and wound up with a respectful curtsy.

"Is it engaged I am?"

"John can never keep his face straight."

"John 's a dear. He 'll have the time of his life."

"You 'll be sure to make blunders."

"My dear mistress, if your Baronet is n't a mummy, he 'll not know whether I 'm pouring champagne or cider vinegar for him by the time the *entrée* comes on. He is going to get valuable side-lights on American domestic affairs. He 'll want to rent the castle and come to New York to live after he sees the American domestic on her native heath. Ring for a cab, honey. I 'm going home to don my war paints. I 'll bring your flowers for you. Dinner at seven?"

"Seven-thirty."

"I 'll be here to meet the noble Baronet and help him off with his galoshes. *Auf wiedersehen.*"

She was off in a frou-frou of silk petticoats and excitement, and Mrs. Winston wandered toward the kitchen, shaking her head, yet

smiling, the while. Nancy's friends have unswerving confidence in her prowess.

At seven o'clock the new maid appeared, and enthusiastically hugged her mistress.

"I 'll go in your room, ma'am, and put on my apron and cap."

"I got John on the telephone, Nancy, and told him. I was afraid he 'd make a scene when you opened the door."

"What did he say?"

"Say! He howled. I could n't wait to hear what he would say when he got his breath, so I rang off."

When Mr. Winston rang his own door-bell, at fifteen minutes past seven, the door was opened by a vision that made the good-looking Englishman with him drop his monocle, and then fish feebly for it and readjust it.

Nancy had not been a false prophet. She was adorable. Her light hair curled in distracting waves from under the most becoming of caps. Her plain black frock and coquettish apron set off her figure to perfection. Her cheeks were pink with excitement. Her eyes were even more mischievous than usual, which was a work of supererogation. Her dimples were struggling val-

iantly to assert themselves, and give the lie to the beautiful demureness of her lips.

The Baronet stared. Then, involuntarily, he turned, and looked with mild speculation at his friend Winston. Guilty embarrassment was written in every line of his host's face. A gleam of pity for Mrs. Winston dawned in the Baronet's heart, and he discreetly shifted his glance once more to the maid. After all, he admitted to himself, Winston would be more than human if——

Nancy took the Englishman's coat and hat. He wore no galoshes.

"I 'll run up and get into a dinner-coat, old man," said Winston, still struggling with confusion.

"Show Sir Henry into the drawing-room, and call Mrs. Winston," he added in choked tones.

"Yes, sir," said the maid respectfully; but Sir Henry, looking up suddenly, intercepted a most deliberate and meaning wink, which the reprehensible young woman was delivering to the departing Winston.

She blushed. The Baronet looked unseeing, and followed her into the front room. As she turned to go he stood between the portières, and looked down at her admir-

"The door was opened by a vision"

ingly. She hesitated, blushed more deeply. He stooped forward——

"I 'll call Mrs. Winston, sir," said an irate voice, from a young woman who vanished through a door at the other end of the room, but the face that looked back at him was dimpling gayly; so Sir Henry smoothed his mustache and tried not to look more foolish than was prescribed in nature's original plan.

"It is too bad," said Mrs. Winston as she led the way to the dining room ten minutes later. "I sent for Nancy, but could n't have her. You see, I ordered the table laid for four, in the hope that she would come. You really must meet her, Sir Henry. She 's quite worth while."

Sir Henry was deciding that pink candlelight really made the Winstons' maid absurdly pretty, but he murmured polite regret.

"Your young women are charming—charming," he said; "but I feel no sense of loss to-night."

He bent gallantly toward his hostess, but sent a swift glance toward the slender girl behind her chair. The gray eyes met his for a fraction of an instant. Then the soft

lashes fell, and only the dimples were conscious.

Winston took up the tale.

"Yes, you really should know Nancy," he said with deep conviction. "She 's a liberal education to any man, imported or domestic. She 's delightful, you know, but plays the very deuce with hearts. I understand her boudoir has a frieze of scalps, and she keeps her open fire going, all winter, with no fuel but written proposals. Flirt! Nancy would flirt with a snow man. What 's more, he 'd thaw, even if the temperature were thirty degrees below zero."

Sir Henry noticed that the maid, who was filling the glasses, had flushed furiously. While he watched her she raised her eyes and shot one vindictive look at the host, who received it with imperturbable serenity.

"Jealous," thought the Baronet. "Surely when the thing is as open as this, his wife must see it. Well-bred little woman to bluff it out so placidly."

"I don't think I would care for your irresistible young woman," he said with a touch of hostility in his tone. "I 'm not fond of that sort of girl. Of course I understand that, being your friend, she is un-

"I'll call Mrs. Winston, sir"

doubtedly delightful, but personally I 've a deep-rooted objection to the emancipated modern girl. We have the type in England. You seem to have more specimens of it here. though I 'll admit your girls are more attractive than ours. I 've an old-fashioned taste for a simple, unworldly type of girl, who does n't flirt with every man she meets and commonize herself in doing it."

Winston choked painfully on a fish-bone, and his wife unfeelingly laughed at him.

"Try a bread-crust," advised Sir Henry with polite concern.

The dinner went smoothly. The waitress was as deft as she was pretty and the guest had to take himself mentally by the throat in order to keep himself from following her every movement with his eyes. He was distrait, and his share of the conversation trailed off into inanities whenever the maid was within his range of vision.

Once or twice he pulled himself up with a round turn, conscious that some one had asked him a question, but absolutely in the dark as to what the question was. He stumbled out of the predicament as best he could, and inwardly cursed himself for a fool; but there was one little shining lock

that fell over her left temple and fluttered there as she moved about. He wanted to brush it back, and yet knew he would miss it if it were suppressed. Then those dimples. One of them was but a hint of a dimple. It was constantly hovering on the verge of self-revealing, yet it never deepened and showed what it could do. If the demure lips would only smile that dimple would surely develop maddeningly. If he only dared make her smile. Then he wondered what he could say that would make her smile. Nothing, under the circumstances. Of course a maid could not show that she listened to the conversation. But if he were alone with her, if she were n't a maid, if— Oh, by Jove, what a bally ass he was making of himself !

Just as he reached this unflattering conclusion she lifted her long lashes and gave him one direct look—half-mocking, half-serious, wholly disconcerting. He felt himself flush to the roots of his hair. He had an awful conviction that he was looking like a fatuous fool. He set his wine-glass down hastily.

The maid came to his side to fill it. He noticed how white and beautiful her hands

were, and how exquisitely her wrists were moulded. She used violet perfume—a very delicate, subtle violet.

"Don't you think so, Sir Henry?" asked Mrs. Winston's voice from some far-away world.

"Yes, indeed," declared the Baronet earnestly.

"Still it's odd for an Englishman to feel that way about it."

"Oh, I don't know," stammered the Baronet. He does n't yet know to what heresy against race and class he had committed himself.

Fortunately Mrs. Winston loved nothing better than the sound of her own voice, and the guest hoped that his own preoccupation would pass unnoticed. Winston, to be sure, did n't say much, but he laughed a great deal. Sir Henry felt that it would be easy for him to dislike his host. Winston had seemed a very good fellow in London, and he had been very decent about his New York clubs and all that; but he appeared rather foolish at his own table. A fellow need n't grin like a Cheshire cat in order to seem amiable.

Then, too, a married man really ought to

pull up a bit. He certainly owed something to his wife. He had no right to carry on an affair with a maid in his own home. It was not only immoral; it was deuced bad taste.

The Baronet worked himself into a fine glow of virtuous indignation and looked sternly at Winston. Then he tried to look sternly at the disreputable young person, but the effort was a lamentable failure. She happened to be looking at him, and their eyes met.

After all, a young and pretty girl might be foolish and easily flattered without meaning any harm. She was such a child. Unquestionably it was all Winston's fault. Winston was a cad. Some one ought to warn her.

He glared at the genial host, who was cheerfully consuming his salad, and, though a gay Lothario, did not look the part.

"You 've a brother somewhere over here, have n't you?" asked Winston.

"Half-brother, in Canada," said Sir Henry.

"You 'll see him?"

"Oh, yes."

He had n't intended to visit Jack, but he

would — yes, certainly he would. Of course Jack was the black sheep; but then, after all, what had he done? A *mésalliance* — game-keeper's daughter. Jack ought to have known better, but the governor had cut up pretty rough. There was no use turning the boy out without a shilling. Probably the girl was pretty. Sir Henry had never thought much about it. He had been in Cambridge at the time, and he had never known Jack well. But now he had the running of things, he must look Jack up and do something for him. A man had a right to marry the woman he loved — but he ought to consider the family. Yes, a man must consider the family. Oh, Lord! what was he going into all that for?

"You are going West, after big game, when you leave here?" Mrs. Winston was asking.

"Yes, I leave to-morrow."

"Why, I thought —" began Winston, surprised.

"I 've had letters," insisted the Baronet firmly. "I 'm obliged to go to-morrow."

"Too bad, old man. You 've not done New York yet. You have n't met Nancy. Still, hunting may be better than being

hunted. On the whole, perhaps you 've chosen the better part. The Indians don't go in for scalps now. You 'll be safer among them."

"John," said Mrs. Winston sternly. Winston certainly did seem to be rather an ass, thought the guest. Perhaps he ought not to drink at all.

The table was cleared. The coffee came on. Sir Henry took his cigar and looked questioningly at his hostess.

"You 'll not let us drive you away?"

"Oh, no, I 'm used to smoke. John smokes like a furnace. Now, if Nancy were only here to help me chatter. We do need a pretty girl in that vacant chair."

"How would I do, ma'am?" asked a sweet, velvety voice.

Mrs. Winston gasped and was speechless.

"That 's the very thing, Mary. You 'll fill the bill. Sit down," said Winston heartily.

The maid slipped into the chair opposite the Baronet, and smiled at him across the roses.

His monocle fell into his coffee with a splash, and he made a fruitless effort to pull himself together.

"This is a democratic country, you know, old man," said Winston jovially. "We don't go in for class distinctions as you do in England — and she *is* a pretty girl. I 'm not afraid to call any unprejudiced man to witness on that point."

Mrs. Winston had caught her breath.

"John," she said, in strangled tones, "I 'm ashamed of you — and of Nancy, too. Sir Henry will think us unpardonably rude. I should never have allowed it; but when Nancy sets her head upon a thing ——"

The Englishman was still staring helplessly across the roses.

The bewitching face beyond them beamed upon him. The fugitive dimple had come out boldly into the open, and the lips were smiling deliciously.

"He does n't look unforgiving," said the smiling lips. "Don't bother, Elizabeth, I 'll explain."

She did.

Two hours later Sir Henry stood once more between the drawing-room portières, smiling down at a piquant face under a dainty cap.

"You have n't told me that I might come to see you," he said reproachfully.

"But you leave to-morrow."

"I 've changed my mind," said the Baronet.

"He 's a ripping good sort," John Winston explained to his wife a week or two later. "But he positively embarrasses me. He can't do enough for me. You 'd think he felt that he owed me an apology for something or other."

"We introduced him to Nancy," said Mrs. Winston.

"'I 've changed my mind,' said the Baronet."

VICARIOUS FLIRTATION

III

VICARIOUS FLIRTATION

NANCY once played fairy godmother, but she is n't saying anything about it in the bosom of her family for fear of making herself unpopular. Cinderella was the sixth number of a continuous performance presented by an all-star cast of Irish cooks. The first performer stole the silver. The second drank the brandy provided for the mince-meat and retired in fine disorder. The third threw flatirons at the washerwoman. The fourth broke sixteen pieces of valuable china in one week. The fifth took such an interest in the table talk that it was fairly stimulating, and genially joined in the conversation; but she left in high dudgeon when told that followers must be out of the house before twelve o'clock. Then came Cinderella, disguised as Norah O'Toole.

To say that Norah was charming would be speaking well within bounds. Two years ago she was the prettiest colleen in County Kildare, and the two years had changed her

abode but not her face. Nancy's mother looked at the new maid askance and prophesied that she was too pretty to be true. Nancy's father, being a man of discretion, said nothing about Norah's looks. Nancy's brother openly proclaimed the girl a peach, and, moved by an unselfish desire to make others happy, brought susceptible college chums home to dinner with him every night. As for Nancy herself, she was torn between hopeless envy and grudging admiration every time she looked at the dark-lashed gray eyes and the radiant complexion of the belle of Kildare.

After Norah had been in the household a week the nerves of the family smoothed themselves out, like a long-cramped scroll, and the angel of peace brooded over the flat. The new maid could cook. She was cleanly almost to the point of godliness. She handled china as if she had been born with a Sèvres platter in one hand and a Cauldon salad-bowl in the other. She was so distracting in her waitress's apron and cap that paterfamilias forgot his skill in carving and made havoc of the napery. She had a voice like a bird's, a delicious brogue, more marked at emotional times than at others, and the

disposition of a cherub. Conversation in the home circle ran in only one groove—praise of Norah.

This state of things was too bright, too beautiful to last. The family were fast lapsing from orthodox grace. Heaven lost its charms for them. With Norah in the flesh it was not necessary for them to have "a bliss to die with, dim descried." Probably it was to save their immortal souls that they were robbed of earthly bliss, but Nancy was unwittingly the angel of destruction.

It all came about, as so many things have come about, through a woman's tears. One Sunday evening, Nancy was on her way to her own room after making an evening alternately Elysian and Tartarean for a lovelorn young man. It is hard to forgive a man for coming when one expects another man who does not come. A week before Nancy had made the man who came often, seriously angry. Since then he had not come at all. As she passed Norah's door she saw something that made her stop suddenly. Norah the gay, Norah the debonair, was sitting limply on the edge of the bed and forlornly mopping a tear-stained face with a wet wad

of kerchief. The faster she mopped, the faster poured the flood.

Nancy is a democratic young woman, and she objects to seeing any girl cry, if the flood-gates can be closed; so she tapped at the door and stepped into the bandbox room. Norah gave one gigantic sob, strangled amidships, and sprang to attention. Nancy pushed her back upon the bed.

"Now, just tell me all about it," she said in a tone that would have wrung confidences from an oyster.

Norah blushed, and supplemented the kerchief with her apron, as she said: "Shure I 'm that ashamed of mesilf, Miss. It 's nothin' at all, at all. I 'm that foolish, sometimes, that I need a good beatin', I do that."

"But what 's the matter?" insisted Nancy.

"Well, ye see, Miss, it 's the ball Tuesday night. The girls was here to-night a-beggin' me to go, and I can't. I would n't be carin' so much, only it 's a County Kildare ball, and all the girls and the lads will be from County Kildare. They 're comin' from all around the country here, and there 's them as I have n't seen since I came over. But there! shure I must n't be throublin' you wid me

silliness. It 's a bit of the homesickness I 'm feelin' the night."

"Why can't you go to the ball?" asked the interrogative young person, perched on the trunk. "Have n't you anybody to take you?"

Norah laughed outright in scorn.

"Ah there, wud ye think I 'd be needin' a lad, Miss? Faith, they 'd be reaching to the next street, if I 'd stand them up in a row. Lad! is it? When I 'm needin' a lad, it 's not cryin' I 'll be. I 'll be dead entirely. If the clothes was only as aisy to get as the lads, I 'd be wearin' velvet. But it 's the dresses that cost more, and wear worse—bad luck to them!"

"You have n't any frock for the ball?"

"That 's it, Miss, but if I had a ha'porth o' sense, I would n't be cryin' over it. You see, all the girls are havin' new dresses, and I was out of work and in the hospital all summer, so I have n't the money. Not a new rag have I had, except my workin' clothes, since I came over. Ye should see Katy's pink silk, Miss; and Mary's got a red cashmere that luks for all the world like a tinnimint-house fire, and neither of them becomin' to the dresses. Shure if I had that

pink silk I 'd be leavin' all of County Kildare dead on the field the mornin'. The policemen would be ringin' for ambulances to carry the lads off in, if the policemen was n't laid out thimsilves—pink's that becomin' to me, Miss."

Norah had warmed at thought of the fray, but slumped into deadly gloom once more. Nancy kicked her heels against the trunk and eyed the mourner critically.

"Norah," she said, finally, "you are just about my size. With a little pulling in, you could wear my clothes. You shall have a pink frock for that ball."

Norah came to her feet, as if an electric battery had been applied to her.

"Ye are n't meanin', Miss ——"

"You shall wear my new pink frock," said Nancy firmly.

The Irish Niobe sank back in consternation, but there was a dawning hope in her eyes.

"Not the one with the apple-blossom wreath on it, Miss?"

"That same."

"Oh, I cud n't be thinkin' of it. It 's that good of you to offer, but I 'd never dare. If ye had some old dress, now, that you 'd never be wearin' again, but ——"

"You 'll be a dream in that pink frock, Norah, and you 'll knock County Kildare into a cocked hat. No, you need n't be saying you won't: I 've got my heart set on it now. You are going to have the time of your life Tuesday night, Norah. I 'll order a pumpkin at the corner grocery, and County Kildare ought to be able to furnish a Prince descended from Brian Boru. Now go to sleep and dream you are a comet with a tail of Kildare lads. Tuesday night you 'll come into my room and I 'll dress you. We 'll not tell any one. You can cover yourself up with a mackintosh so that no one here will see the frock, and then you 'll go off and utterly snuff out that tenement-house fire and the pink silk. Good-night."

Norah held the door open and beamed adoration.

"Ye see, Miss," she said, becoming suddenly interested in the pattern of the carpet, "Terence will be there."

Nancy stopped. "Who 's Terence? Is he the Prince?" she asked.

"Well, Miss, no. He is n't a prince, but he 's a very nice lad. We was keepin' company in Brooklyn, but he saw Jerry Donahue a-kissin' me,—shure, it was quite by accident,

Miss,— but Terence, he 's that unreasonable, and he would have no excuse at all. So he gave Jerry two black eyes for a treat, and he went off to take a job in the Capitol at Albany, an' niver sayin' a word to me at all. If he thought I 'd be after callin' him back, it 's little he knows of the ways of Kildare girls. There 's plenty of lads with good tempers. But I 'm not denyin', Miss, he was that handsome an' I 'm wishin' I 'd been more careful there was n't anybody lookin' when Jerry kissed me. And now, Katy 's tellin' me, the evenin', that Terence is back in New York and is doin' fine, but is that stiff and bad-tempered. He 's to take Lizzie Sullivan to the ball. She 's that set up about him and she 's havin' a blue organdy dress made."

"Norah," said Nancy with emphasis, "you shall have my pink fan and my rhinestone combs. My money is on you. Sure Jerry Donahue is a man of sense. Small credit to the man who would n't kiss you — and I wish I were going to have as much fun Tuesday night as you are. That 's all."

"The darlin' that ye are!" laughed Norah happily.

On Tuesday night dinner was early.

Nancy had mentioned that Norah wanted to go out somewhere. After the dishes were washed, one radiant, beaming Irish girl put herself into the hands of an American girl who had herself prepared for critical campaigns, and knew the importance of every hair-twist and bodice-fold. Nancy cast an occasional guilty look toward the door, as she laced the plump figure into the swell pink frock. She had a definite conviction that her mother's altruism would n't extend to pink *crêpe;* and then her mother was too old to realize the vital importance of an occasion like this.

Norah twinkled at herself in the mirror with wondering and dimpling delight, and Nancy grew explosively enthusiastic as the toilet progressed. The waving auburn hair was drawn up in soft masses to the top of the dainty head and held in place by sparkling combs. The décolleté sleeveless bodice showed a plump white neck full of delicious curves, and rounded arms that should never have been hidden under gloves. The girl's cheeks needed no rouge, but Nancy powdered the bewitching, upturned face, and then stood back and looked at the transformed Cinderella.

"Heaven help the lads of County Kildare, this night!" she said gayly. "I 'll never have the heart to wear that gown again, after seeing you in it. Lizzie Sullivan's guardian angel is now trailing his wings in the dust and shedding bitter, impotent tears. Run along, little girl, and make Terence as miserable as the law allows."

Norah drew the mackintosh over her finery and stood for a moment before the door, looking at the fairy godmother.

"There 's no other so good as you, Miss." There were tears in her eyes as she spoke.

The young mistress put a hand on each shoulder of the girl, and kissed her lightly on the cheek.

"We 're all young just once, my dear. We must dance and flirt while we can, and —I 've a Terence myself. Run along. Good-night."

Nancy's relatives have always said she had no proper sense of dignity.

The ball was a tremendous success. County Kildare turned out in force, and the hall was fairly filled when Norah arrived upon the scene of action. The mackintosh was shed in the dressing-room, and the modish pink gown, feeling itself sadly out of

place, was trailed across the room with as good a grace as though its owner were managing its folds. A subdued murmur followed it. Norah's cheeks grew redder and her eyes brighter.

"It 's a queen ye are the night," whispered Barney Magrue, in her ear. "Ye 'll be afther givin' me all the waltzes?"

"Will I that, Barney Magrue? — an' eighteen waltzes on the card! Take shame to yersilf! Ye 'll take me to Mrs. Rafferty that 's resavin' with the committee at the head of the stairs. Afther that, we 'll talk of the dancin'. Oh, boys, go along with you. Ye 'd be takin' all my dances four times over. I 'll be lookin' the prospect over first. One dance is enough for each one of you. No, Patrick, I 'll not be savin' any six two-steps for you. Misther Diggins, I 'm glad to know you, but I 'm not fillin' my card now. Barney, it 's a blatherer ye are. Ye like my dress, is it? It is n't so much, but I 'm glad ye like it. Will I give ye one of the blossoms to wear? That I will not. Mrs. Rafferty, ye 're the youngest Kildare girl of them all. Shure, if there was many girls back there like you there 'd be no Kildare lads comin' to America. Oh,

do ye think so? It 's a pretty little dress I do think, but I were n't thinkin' it was so becomin'."

Mrs. Rafferty stared in opened-mouthed wonder.

"It 's a picture out of a fashion book ye are, Norah, only ye 're better-lukin'," Mrs. Rafferty said. "Mike, will ye come here and luk at Norah O'Toole? Did ye iver know Kildare to turn out a foiner girl, an' it the greatest county in Oirland for handsome girls? Well, an' there comes Terence McManus wid Lizzie Sullivan. They do say he 's the great catch now. Norah, darlin', wud ye luk at Lizzie a-hangin' to him—an' him wid a Broadway saloon av his own an' Senators an' Governors a-clappin' him on the back."

Norah stood at the top of the stairs against a background of black coats and trousers. Terence, looking up, saw a vision in shimmering pink, and a face that set his heart thumping. His own face flushed and he forgot the girl hanging on his arm, forgot fat Mrs. Rafferty and the Reception Committee waiting to make much of him at the head of the stairs. He saw only the face rising above the gleaming pink gown

and the blossom-wreaths. He sprang up the steps, still staring hungrily at the laughing face, and as he reached her the girl nodded carelessly and said :

" How do ye do, Mr. McManus? Was it all the waltzes ye were wantin', Barney?"

She gave Barney a tender glance that staggered him and turned with him to the crowd of eager lads, begging for her dances and her smiles. Nancy's gown fairly wriggled with delight. Its owner could not have done it more credit.

It was in the Lancers that Norah and Terence met again and touched hands. His face was white and angry. She was serenely smiling.

" And did ye like Albany, Mr. McManus?"

" I did, Miss O'Toole."

" Why did ye lave it? Do ye always lave the things ye like?"

" Sometimes I have to do that same."

" Was it debts, Mr. McManus?" Her dimples were all showing now. He scowled.

" Ye know well why I came back to New York."

" I 'm hearin' ye have a splendid place and great friends. I wish ye luck."

" I 've no luck."

"Arrah, then! listen to the ingratitude of him, an' him with a Broadway saloon of his own!"

"Where is Jerry Donahue?"

"And how should I know, then?"

"Are n't ye keepin' company with him?"

"It 's four months ago I saw him last."

"Norah, darlin', I heard ye were to marry him."

"It 's more than he heard, poor lad."

He was forgetting the figures of the dance, and the boys and girls were smiling.

"Ye were n't in love with him, darlin'?"

"It 's likely it was Barney ye were hearin' about, Mr. McManus."

She whirled away, and he set his teeth viciously.

"I 'll throuble ye no more," he muttered, as they passed in the chain.

"More power to ye," she laughed, looking up into Barney's eyes, and catching up the train of the demoralizing pink gown.

Terence did no more dancing. He stood around in corners and glared at the crowd. Even his diamond shirt-stud shot out vindictive rays when Barney Magrue danced by, and he resolutely turned his eyes away from every glimmer of pink. The old friends who

stopped to talk to him went away hot under the collar.

"Shure, Terence McManus is that shtuck up since he 's been associatin' wid the legislatoors that he has n't a civil word to throw to a dog," said the genial Mrs. Rafferty, indignantly, after an encounter with the sulky lion.

The dance before the last was "lady's choice." Terence stood by an open window, trying to cool his temper, and staring out into the night. A hand touched his arm.

"Mr. McManus, will ye dance the waltz with me?"

The voice made his blood leap, but his scowl deepened.

"Is it a fool ye think I am?" he asked.

"I do that," said the laughing voice with a queer, tearful little note in it, "and it 's another that 's talkin' to ye. Terence, lad, ye would n't be unkind enough to say no, an' me pickin' ye out from all the lads, an' you so hard to me, all the months?"

She was looking into his eyes now, but it was n't the look she had given Barney and the others. The apple blossoms on Nancy's gown clung to the white, babyish shoulders and drooped over the rounded arms. She

was the old Norah, with a new and subtle charm which the stupid masculine brain could feel but never analyze.

"Ah, Terence!"

"But ye did kiss Jerry."

"An' him bein' sent away for good, on your account, an' feelin' that unhappy it made me cry to think I cud n't be two girls an' marry ye both. Ah, Terence, ye cud n't be carin' about that now, an' I lovin' ye even when ye acted so hard an' wud n't give me a chance to tell ye!"

He was visibly thawing.

"Ye did n't write."

"Wud ye love a girl that wud chase ye to Albany?"

"Then why did ye tell me now?"

"Because I cud see ye, an' 't was in your eyes that ye wud like to hear it, Terence —darlin'."

He melted, but he made one stand before he gave in utterly.

"Ye 'll marry me this day a month, Norah?"

She nodded. His arm went around her waist, crushing the pink chiffon sash beyond redemption, and they joined the waltz. Something more than the pink gown made

her radiant, and his diamond stud paled beside the light in his eyes.

Nancy's mother looked for a new cook, and Nancy realized the cost of altruism, but she has never regretted sacrificing the pink frock and the family cook. The man who came often was less stout-hearted than Terence,—he surrendered unconditionally.

A GOOD LIE GONE WRONG

IV

A GOOD LIE GONE WRONG

"NOW there is a man who does n't believe a word I say," remarked Nancy calmly, as the lawyer walked away.

The man who came often looked injured.

"Where did you know him so well?" he asked with the acid accent that rejoices the heart of a woman.

"Your inference is n't flattering, Bobby, but your jealousy is; so I 'll forgive you. I find it easy to forgive a nice man anything save a lack of interest in me. It really makes very little difference to me whether he is interested in my faults or my virtues, so long as the interest is there. So you don't believe me either?"

"I did n't say that."

"But you know me so well, and it is a poor syllogism that will not work backwards. Do be logical, Bobby. It 's the proud prerogative of your sex, and you really must cling to a few rights, in spite of the new

woman. Now I do not pretend to logic, but I take off my hat to it when I meet it in a man. There have been moments when I 've suspected myself of a leaning towards logic; but I 've always taken strenuous precautionary measures whenever I saw the symptoms. I wear a rabbit's foot and a white elephant to ward off the calamity. Heaven deliver me from a logical woman. I would rather wear bloomers than logic. I 'd consider it less of an infringement upon masculine privileges."

"But where did you know him so well?" persisted the man who came often.

"Now, curiosity is distinctively a feminine vice," continued Nancy, reflectively. "From Adam down, men have been devoid of it. That 's why they have so much room for logic in their make-up.

"When you look as vicious as that, Bobby, I feel that I could almost love you. I 've hoped, at times, that you would shake me violently when I did n't behave well. Your amiability is the one lamentable thing about you. When I was younger than I am now, I read that somewhere down in Africa there is a tribe in which the regular method of courtship is for the love-smitten

"'But where did you know him so well?' persisted the man who came often"

man to hit his adored one on the head with a club. If she lives and regains her senses, she feels firmly convinced that he loves her. That book gave me a mighty leaning toward the field of foreign missions, but I dare say it 's all spoiled down in Africa now. Probably effete modern notions have crept in with the explorers and missionaries ; and the man has put away his stuffed club and sends his lady violets and chocolates. This is treachery to my sex, Bobby, but mark my words : if you want a woman to adore you, beat her ! Don't nag at her ; that 's maddening. And don't be patient with her ; that 's fatal."

" But why does n't he believe you ? "

" My dear young friend, in your last incarnation you were either a bull-dog or a leech. Your stick-to-it-ive powers are more than human. He does n't believe me because— Bobby, this is a very sad tale— a most mortifying tale. I don't figure nobly in it. Are you sure your affection for me will stand the strain ? "

" It has had the tests that make me feel measurably certain of it," said the man who came often.

" Well, once upon a time, I visited my

aunt in a small Massachusetts town. Some way or other the fact that the scene is laid in Massachusetts makes my bad behavior seem worse than it would in a New York setting. In Kentucky or California I 'm positive anything short of breaking all the commandments would n't give my conscience a flutter. But my aunt did live in Massachusetts. So did the judge. He was the youngest judge in the State. The other lawyers said he did n't know any law, but that he could make a hitching-post vote for him if he turned his eloquence loose on it. That 's much better than knowing law, Bobby.

" When I went there to visit, the hitching-posts had all been won over, and the golden-tongued orator did n't have anything to practise upon. No, Bobby, this is n't a disguised advertisement of Bryan and free silver. I hate ghost stories. This is a simple tale of love and war.

" Well, as I said, material was needed. Somebody has remarked that genius implies two individualities, a brain to conceive, and a brain to receive. I was willing to be offered up on the altar of genius. I 've always said that I would rather be a part of

a man's great success than have a pale anæmic little success of my own. I have contributed to a great many successes, Bobby. That 's a comfort to me in my darkest hours.

"So I saw the judge, very often. He is the most entertaining man I have ever known. I entirely understand the hitching-post's point of view. I would have voted for him for any State or municipal office. There were times when I felt that I could give him my vote even if he were proposed, or did propose for a private and domestic holding.

"There were other men. They were needed to keep the judge at his best. One may wipe the other men out of the foreground of the picture, Bobby, but it is always well to have them hovering in the middle distance, so that, occasionally, one of them may be brought forward as a pace-maker.

"The judge says that he is Irish. I have a firm conviction that his ancestors lived in Africa, and understood the use of the stuffed club. His system was a nineteenth-century translation of the original African version. I liked it. I really did. I had

never been bullied and adored, at one and the same time, by a distinctly vertebrate being, and the sensation was pleasant, but awesome. I was just a little bit afraid of him.

"The summer went by, pleasantly enough; and when October came, I was n't as interested as I had been. Or, yes; I was as interested, but I had grown used to the sensation. It was like taking a tonic. One finally reaches a point where the tonic does n't spur the system. Caviare and cocktails lose their effect if taken regularly. That 's a great natural law, Bobby, that ought to be in the manual of compulsory education for young men and women in love.

"The other day I saw in a magazine a column headed 'First Aid to Wounded Hearts.' I feel that I could make such a column both edifying and helpful. Do you know, Bobby, the Chinese have some very knowing proverbs. One of them is engraved on a charm that was given to me by a Chinese student at Harvard. Did you ever see a Chinaman in love?—But that 's another story. About this proverb. It looks like a dismembered spider; but my

Chinaman said it meant, 'Do nothing too much.' I wish I had a pocketful of those charms, Bobby. I 'd like to distribute them among the men I know best.

"The judge was well educated, but he needed to read the Chinese classics. He was delightful, but I yearned for novelty. Even the maids have their Thursday afternoons and Sunday evenings off.

"Just when my yawn was getting beyond polite control, something happened.

"The judge had been at the house on Saturday evening, and I had promised to go for a walk with him at two o'clock on Sunday—not that the judge loved walking, Bobby, but that he hated other Sunday callers. Sunday morning, one of my aunt's friends telephoned to me. She was to have a Cleveland man to dinner. He was rich and handsome and clever and jolly, and he liked all the things I liked, and he could flirt in six languages. In fact he was a registered lady-killer, but was himself invulnerable. She wanted me to meet him. I positively must help her. The baby had been croupy all night and she was a wreck. Her husband was down with grippe and stupid as an owl. Humanity demanded that

I should save the Paragon of the World from a stupid time. Would n't I, could n't I come to the rescue and dine with her, at one o'clock ?

" Now, Bobby, that Cleveland man seemed like a direct answer to prayer. I could n't consistently turn from the gift of a kind Providence. To be sure, there was the judge. He was off in the country for the morning, so I could n't send him word. Then, too, I doubted his thinking the excuse valid. Men have absolutely no sense of proportion in such matters, and I 've often noticed that altruism is n't the ' magerful ' man's crowning virtue.

" I hesitated. I was too fond of the old friend to be willing to offend him, but my soul did thirst for fresh fields and pastures new. I could have stood the wealth, beauty, cleverness, etc., but the ' lady-killer ' and ' invulnerable ' caught me. Never, never should the name of my father's daughter go ringing down the corridors of time with a stigma of cowardice clinging to it. A lady-killer and invulnerable !—

" The judge went to the wall. I went to the dinner.

" The blessed baby was croupy enough

to need his mother. The father was grippy enough to sleep. The Cleveland Paragon was most of the things in the advertisement—but invulnerable? Well, I don't know.

"I had thought I might hurry home after dinner, and that possibly the judge would wait. So I had ordered the carriage at 2.30. It came, and I offered to set the Paragon down at his hotel. It was a glorious October day. We climbed into the trap. The air was like wine. The Paragon sighed something about the beauty of the country on such a day. I felt that I was retiring from the field too early in the engagement. My heart made one last effort to be true to Poll—meaning the judge. Then I said:

"'Would you like a country drive?'

"He would.

"We had it.

"At 6.15, I drove up to my aunt's door. The Paragon had been dumped at the hotel. The sun was down. The color had gone out of the day, and the pangs of remorse had set in. I knew I had n't been decent, and I had an awful conviction that I had offended the judge, and that he would n't

come around easily. I liked him better than sixteen of the Paragon, and I did n't know how to propitiate him.

"I 've always contended that the way of the transgressor is hard—to find; but I had found it, and it seemed that the Sunday-school books were quite right. I was even ready to believe that a little boy who would fish on Sunday would be drowned.

"If any other man had been in question, I would have told him the truth calmly, and allowed him to like it or dislike it as he chose; but I did n't want the judge to dislike it—or me; and I was afraid of him. Let this story be a warning to you, Bobby. Don't be awesome. You may win the girl by it; but you will probably drive her from the path of childlike frankness and veracity.

"I said to myself:

"'Nancy, my child, verily, *descensus Averni* is appallingly *facilis*. You must lie, lie stoutly and consistently. So may you keep your friend with the bad disposition, though you may lose your self-respect. You would probably miss your self-respect much less than you would miss the friend with the bad disposition.'

"Monday morning I called up the Court-

house on the telephone. The judge's voice was honeyed. That made me uneasy. I apologized. He quite understood. That was uncanny. I confounded myself in explanations. I descended to trivialities. There I made a fatal error. A well-told lie never goes into details, you know. I told the man at the other end of the 'phone how worried I had been because I had to go to the dinner, how I hurried home the moment I could escape, how I reached there just after he left, how sorry I was that he was too impatient to wait even a few moments.

"He said 'yes, yes,' to everything. His voice was as the voice of a cooing dove, Bobby. He begged me not to bother my head about the matter. He had n't misunderstood me for a moment.

"I rang off. It all seemed too good to be true, and his angelic confidence in me made me feel like a 'houn' dog'—as my Virginia cousin would say. But I made an offering to Mercury, god of lies; and, that evening I put on my new pink frock. The judge did n't come. He did n't come the next evening. Bobby, he never saw that pink frock! It was worn out before

he spent another evening with me! I did n't meet him anywhere in society, for he did n't go out at all during the rest of that winter. Occasionally I did meet him on the street. He was as genial as a May morning. He beamed on me. He even stood by the carriage and talked to me, if some one else was with me. Really, you know, it was maddening. I could n't ask him what was the matter, when he gave me no reason to think he was offended and treated me most amiably. He had a right to stay away from the house if he wanted to do it, and I was too proud to protest. I felt sure there was something wrong about that Sunday business, but what could I do?

"In February I came home. In June I went back to my aunt's to spend a month. No one knew I was expected; and the day after I arrived I went to a picnic. The judge was there. Every one was surprised to see me, and he seemed a trifle upset, but he was very cordial. In the afternoon the crowd started across the woods to the place where the servants were to have supper ready. The judge happened to walk with me, and I sprained my ankle.

"I really did, Bobby; no fake at all. It

swelled so that my shoe had to be cut. I tried to walk and not make a fuss; but we lagged behind, and finally I could n't take another step. I just dropped down on the grass and the tears came into my eyes. The judge plumped down beside me and saw the tears. He had never seen me cry before. I seldom do it, Bobby. I have a feeling that crying before a man is taking an unfair advantage, making a duelling opponent stand with the sun in his eyes, or something of that kind. I do like a fair fight. Then, again, Bobby, I 'm a thrifty soul. Tears, like a lie, are too good a thing to be wasted. They should be reserved for crucial occasions.

"But I cried. My haughty friend thawed slightly.

"'Why, you poor child, is it so bad as that?' he said.

"I nodded. Sympathy was the last straw. My ankle did hurt so, and he had been such a horrid brute, and I felt so shamefully abused that I wept floods. It was a disgusting exhibition, Bobby, and I 'm not pretty when I cry. My face all screws up and gets swollen and splotchy. But the judge did the only thing a rational man could do, un-

der the circumstances. When I got my breath— Bobby, you can't help being bad-tempered, but you need n't be impolite. You 've an evil mind. I was about to explain that I was choked with tears.

"Well, when I did get my breath, I told him what I thought about his behavior. I was positively eloquent over my wrongs. I would have convinced any jury.

"'Of course you were not in any way to blame for the coolness,' said the judge.

"'Indeed I was n't. You never had a better friend.'

"'And that October Sunday?'

"'I explained about that and you said it was all right. Why were n't you honest about it? I hate a man who can't tell the truth."

"Oh, Bobby, did n't I just lay myself open to an upper cut?

"The judge smiled. I did n't like that smile.

"'Yes, I know. I suppose I was unreasonable. You did hurry home and got there just after I left.'

"His tone was queer. It had an unnatural sweetness about it. But there was n't anything for me to do except stick to my story.

"'Yes,' I said.

"'Well, my dear young woman, it may interest you to know that when I left your house, at three minutes past two, I called on the girl who lives next door to you. I don't remember her name.'

"'Margaret Wilson,' I said faintly. A great light began to dawn upon me. No one ever called on the Wilsons. They were utterly hopeless.

"'Exactly. I had been invited to call there, but had never intended going. I changed my mind and went. I made a very long call. Miss Wilson was quite fluttered by the sudden burst of appreciation. I suppose she wonders why I never came back. I stayed until I saw you get out of the trap at your door. Then I looked at my watch. It was fifteen minutes past six. I took my hat and went home. I was n't happy, but I tried to give you the benefit of the doubt.

"'Your telephone story the next morning did away with the doubt. I hate a woman who can't tell the truth. I don't allow any woman to make a fool of me twice.'

"Oh, Bobby, Bobby, if he is ever like that when he sentences a criminal to death, the

poor thing will never live to be hanged. I touched bottom in shame and mortification. He got up and towered over me. He looked horribly big and angry. His tone was enough to wither me. I heard my hair singe.

"Then suddenly the humorous side of the thing rolled over me like a flood. To think of the touches I gave to that lie, while all the time he knew the truth! How I patted the story and bolstered it up and polished it, and then tied myself up in a hangman's noose, while he listened with that detestable smile. The joke was on me, and I would have appreciated it if I had known I was to die the next moment. I dropped back on the moss and positively howled for glee. Then I had hysterics for the first time in my life.

"The judge was livid with rage.

"'I thought you might have the grace to be ashamed of it. But it seems I don't know you yet.'

"I wiped my eyes.

"'Oh, yes. I 'm ashamed, but it 's the funniest thing I ever heard.' And off I went into more hysterics.

"He glowered.

"'Stop that, or I 'll lose my temper and

shake you!' he said. African ancestor to the fore, you see.

"I sat up and looked defiant.

"'You 're the one to be ashamed,' I said. 'Are you proud of having such an ugly, vicious disposition that even your best friend is afraid to tell you the truth, and is driven to lying because she can't depend on your sense of justice, and can't bear the thought of losing your friendship?

"'I would n't have lied to any one else. I hate lies. I had done a foolish thing and was sorry, and I cared such a lot about what you would think, and I knew you would n't be manly and kind, and—' Well, Bobby, I 'll spare you the details.

"It was a beautiful piece of special pleading. At the end of it any judge and jury would have freed the original defendant and sentenced the original plaintiff to be hanged by the neck until he was dead.

"The judge was most contrite.

"I finally forgave him.

"A woman makes a fatal mistake, Bobby, if she ever allows a man to think he is forgiving her. The judge and I have been the best of friends ever since; only he does n't believe anything I tell him, unless I swear

to it before a notary, and he has his doubts then. That 's why he keeps on asking me to marry him. I tell him I can't do it, but he does n't believe me. It 's a most painful thing to have a bad reputation, Bobby. I hope my experience will be a warning to you."

"It will," said Bobby, with gloomy significance.

Nancy laughed.

MISTAKEN DIAGNOSIS

V

MISTAKEN DIAGNOSIS

"I MAY have my faults," said Nancy, looking appropriately modest; "but at any rate I have no vanity."

The man who came often, being wise in his generation, made no audible comment, but he grinned, and Nancy resented the grin.

"Oh, yes! of course you think that because I straighten my hat every time I pass a mirror, and because I like pretty clothes, I 'm vain; but that is n't vanity. It is habit. Vanity is something bigger than that, and I 've always feared I had the big kind; but my mind is relieved. I 've conclusively proved that my sense of humor takes up all the space that is usually given over to vanity in a woman's head."

"Who was the man?" asked the blower of smoke rings, who occupied the divan.

"Why should there be a man in it?" protested Nancy hotly. "Positively, the egotism of men is colossal. The Pyramids ought to be knocked out of the list of the

seven wonders of the world and masculine egotism put in their place. A man thinks a woman cannot do anything, think anything, feel anything, unless a man is concerned. For my part, I could jog along very comfortably if there should be another flood, and the new ark could accommodate only the feminine things. To be sure, there was a man in this story, but he was quite accidental. I know lots of interesting stories that have n't a man even in their prologues or epilogues. As for a man who grins like a Cheshire cat, I would n't put him in any sort of story. He is n't fit for anything literary except a tooth-powder advertisement."

"Tell me the story," urged Bobby, unmoved by abuse, and grinning more cheerfully than ever. Nobody really minds Nancy's bad temper. Only homely women are forced to choose between excessive amiability and unpopularity.

"This story goes back to the creation," began the girl without vanity.

"*Passons au déluge*," quoted her audience, entreatingly. She frowned him down.

"Jack Dutton and I were born next door to each other."

"'I may have my faults,' said Nancy, 'but at any rate I have no vanity'"

"This sounds familiar. Were there apple-trees in the garden?"

"There were, and we ate the green apples with salt, and obtained a knowledge of evil that kept our mothers awake nights. Really, though, you know, Jack was a very nice little boy—no such muff as Adam. He always did things first, and invited me into the game, and never peached, and always took whippings for both of us. The modern Adam may be just as sinful as the old Adam, but at least he has learned to lie like a gentleman.

"Well,"—Nancy never can get a fair running start until she has said "well,"—"Jack went away to school and we moved to New York, and I did n't see him again or hear anything about him until this fall. One day I went to a club's ladies' day. Some one said, 'May I present Dr. Dutton?' and there was Jack. He was a splendid big fellow, with grave eyes and a Van Dyke beard and a nice voice. I knew him at once, but he did n't recognize me until I spoke. Putting up one's hair and putting down one's skirts and wearing New York clothes does make a difference, you know. The last time Jack had seen me I had a mop of short

hair and a short checked pinafore and no shoes or stockings, and I was hanging out of the big elm tree at the front gate to watch him go by to the train. When I gurgled 'Jack,' he knew. We fell upon each other's necks and went off to a corner and scandalized my chaperon. He was a surgeon, quite a famous surgeon, if you please, and he lived near us. He wanted to call that night and take me to the theatre the next night and play golf with me on Saturday. It seemed almost like a special providence that you had gone to California two days before and made room for him."

"You did n't say anything about him in your letters," said Bobby, studying a particularly fat smoke ring with deep interest.

Nancy looked surprised.

"Now why should I write to you about him? You and he had n't any early associations to bind you together. I thought you would rather hear about me."

"It 's exceedingly difficult to get a snapshot of you, without finding a man in the picture. I 'm reconciled to groups. When there is no man in your letters, I know I 'm getting expurgated editions, and I resent it. Now about this surgeon——"

"He was very nice."

"We are all nice when sufficiently in love."

"You should take the treatment, Bobby."

"If I were any nicer than I am you would marry me, and then who would entertain me? Does a surgeon in love show the ordinary symptoms?"

Nancy laughed.

"The symptoms are n't different, but there were complications in this case."

"Mother object?"

"Oh dear no. That would n't be a complication. She has always objected to you."

"Your mother's anxiety is the only thing that encourages me," sighed Bobby. "Go on with the story."

"People talked a good deal. They hoped I was going to be sensible at last, and marry an eligible man. Do you know, Bobby, I 've been a great benefactor to my social circle. They must talk, and to provide them with fresh material is my chief aim in life. I 'm thinking of starting a club for the promotion of polite conversation, each member guaranteeing to furnish a certain number of acts that would provide food for gossip every fortnight. There would be a woman's

club uniting entertainment and philanthropy, which is more than most of them can do."

Bobby shook his head.

"Supererogation, my dear child. Individual feminine folly and feminine imagination will keep the wheels of gossip running. Organization and united effort are n't necessary. Just go on doing your best, alone. So far you have n't anything to reproach yourself with. You can be relied upon for at least one topic a fortnight; and when things are slow, I 'm always on hand to furnish material."

"No one except mother talks about you any more. She has no confidence in my common sense. I 'm much more rational than my family believes. I 've always understood, Bobby, that you were an impossible person."

"Make it improbable," suggested the detrimental, serenely.

"Mother liked Jack."

"How much was his practice worth?"

"And they call women cats; Bobby, she loved him for his personal charms and virtues. So did I. I 've always said I would n't marry a doctor, but a surgeon is n't so bad. Patients don't make up their minds in the

middle of the night to have their legs cut off, and a surgeon can take his wife to evening functions without having messengers tumbling up the front steps after him all evening. I had come round to the point where I thought life with a surgeon might be endurable when Priscilla came to spend two months with me. She thought Jack was splendid. After he called the night she arrived, she went into mother's room, and she and mother talked for hours. Then Priscilla came in to me and tried to look as if they had been discussing steam heat and sanitary plumbing. She reached Jack by way of the Philippines and the South African veldts, and dropped him into the conversation as though she had n't thought of him since the door closed on him. She talked about his good looks and his air of distinction. She liked his eyes, and thought he talked uncommonly well, and she was sure he would make a mark for himself in the world. He was the kind of man any sensible woman could love, and it was easy to see what he thought of me. Oh, she went on that way for hours. She was still talking when I went to sleep, but I did n't confide in her, because I had n't

anything to confide. I just said 'Yes, yes,' at stated intervals.

"Jack came more and more often. He was a positive nuisance. I could n't open the front door without his tumbling into the hall, and he sent flowers, and candy, and books, and theatre tickets. He was awfully nice to Priscilla, always wanted her to go with us everywhere, insisted upon it vehemently, and never left her out of anything. I appreciated that immensely. I did want her to have a good time during her visit, and some men are horrid about one's girl friends. Now, you were never nice to Priscilla."

"There 's only one being I dislike more than Priscilla, and that 's your skye terrier. It makes me vicious to see you spoon with either of them," said the man, calmly.

"Ugly, envious disposition you have! Jack was different. He said he thought a loyal friendship between two girls was a beautiful thing, and he would let me rave about Priscilla by the hour. I was ashamed sometimes, after he had gone, to think how much I had talked about her, and how patient he had been. She admired him tremendously, never was tired of singing his praises.

I went to sleep every night with the chant in my ears. She would n't stay in the room when he came; always made some sort of an excuse and fled, although I stormed about it. It looked horribly pointed. Priscilla would n't go out with us once in a blue moon, either. She 'd promise; but, at the last moment, she would have neuralgia or tonsillitis, or anything short of smallpox. She even sprained her ankle for the Yale-Princeton football game, and sat around with it bandaged for days. I 'm positive there was n't a thing wrong with it, but mother did the bandaging. Jack did n't get along as fast as he might have done with all the help he had. He was devoted and chummy, but he seemed diffident. By and by he reached the quiet, dreamy stage, where he sat and stared at me by the hour, and opened and shut his mouth once in a while without saying anything. Then he got where he talked about love—in the abstract, you know, about what a woman could mean in a man's life, and what a man ought to be for the sake of a girl he loves, and men's unworthiness, and women's angelic attributes, and homes, and children, and old age, and all that sort of thing."

The man who came often sat up.

"Bless my soul! Is that the way to do it? I 'm afraid I — well, it 's so long ago that I don't remember distinctly, but was n't I inartistically direct?" he inquired, anxiously.

"You were. You did n't follow any of the rules of the game."

"No wonder I was n't a success. Still there 's Vardon. His golf form is n't at all according to law and gospel, but he does win out. On the whole, I 'll just try to keep my eye on the ball, and won't change my form. Did Jack put well?"

Nancy frowned.

"This is a serious story, Bobby. It 's rude to interrupt. Jack asked my opinion about all sorts of points in love and matrimony. He could n't get away from the subject, but he stuck to glittering generalities. He did n't have the moral courage to particularize."

"I thought so. He may be good on a long drive, but I can beat his putting," murmured Bobby.

"Now I liked Jack, liked him heartily. I did n't want him to ask me to marry him unless I intended to say yes. There 's a great

deal of entertainment in finding out whether a man is in love; but, having satisfied her curiosity, a nice girl spares a man the humiliation of being rejected if she can."

The man who came often looked impressed.

"Then, if she allows him to propose, it is because she intends marrying him? Nancy, this is a delicate way of breaking the glad news to me. You 've made me a happy man. Suppose we drop Jack and celebrate the joyous occasion."

Nancy's cheeks were red.

"I mean it," she said, hotly. "I detest proposals. You propose every other day, but it does n't hurt you because you are n't in earnest. I 'm talking about sensitive men, capable of real feeling. I was very serious about Jack. He was honest and moral and clever and rich. There did n't seem to be a flaw in him. He would make a splendid husband, much too good for me, and it would please the family. Of course I was n't in love with him. I was more nearly in love with several other men, but then my tastes are low. I felt that I ought to marry Jack.

"At last I talked very frankly about it

with Priscilla. I had n't done that before. If I have anything to say about the men who fall in love with me, I usually say it to them, not to my girl friends. But I did talk to Priscilla. She treated me to discourses that sounded as if she had cribbed them from Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius. She was positively oracular. Her ideas on the holy state of matrimony ought to be published and found in every home. She did n't think I ought to cherish foolish ideas of love, the volcanic absorbing passion had n't any decent existence. It belonged to French novels and the lower classes. Respect and liking and confidence were the things on which to begin housekeeping. Incidentally it was well to have a bank account. It fostered the respect and confidence. Here was a man of men, a paragon of all the virtues, much too good for me. He adored me and could n't help making me happy. It would be absurd, mawkish, suicidal, to say ' no ' to him, just because it did n't give me nervous chills to hear his footsteps in the front hall. I had heard mother talk that way, but Priscilla was most convincing. She should go in for matrimonial promoting as a profession. There 'd be a fortune for her in it.

She quite brought me around. Her logic was irrefutable. I still sighed for the nervous chills; but I made up my mind that I must get along without them and marry virtue incarnate, in the shape of the surgeon.

"One night I cried floods of tears, and had an *auto da fe* of dreams and sentiment. The next day I told Priscilla I would allow Jack to propose and would accept him that afternoon when he dropped in for tea. Priscilla went out to make calls, and I put on my pink gown and the expression of an early Christian martyr. I had an awful conviction that I was going to funk at the fence, but at least I would make a brave start. Jack did n't come. At six o'clock Priscilla came in with a horrible headache, and asked me just to let her alone and not allow any one to go to her room. I was sorry for her, but I felt like a criminal reprieved at the gallows.

"Jack did n't come that night. The next day I had a note apologizing—rush of work, would be up in a few days. I asked Priscilla if she did n't think it queer, and she did. She was awfully nice to me, seemed to think I was feeling badly, and rubbed around and purred and made a doormat of

herself for me. I never knew her to be so devoted and humble. She told me how much nicer and prettier and nobler I was than she had ever dreamed of being. She said she was n't worthy to tie my shoelaces. She swore she never had loved a friend as she loved me and that she could n't be disloyal to me if she tried. She gave me her best shell comb and tried to make me take her pearl locket. I was n't used to such devotion, and it made me tired. I could n't live up to it, and I did n't want to hurt her feelings. One day mother came to me and asked if I knew what she had done to offend Priscilla. She said the child hardly spoke to her and seemed anxious to avoid being alone with her. Jack did n't turn up that week nor the next, and then, the third week, I met the English war correspondent, and I did n't have time to think about Jack until just before Christmas. Priscilla and I had come in from the theatre, and I had a Christmasy good-will-toward-men mood.

"'I 'm going to write to Jack Dutton and ask him what 's the matter,' I said.

"Priscilla jumped. 'Oh, I would n't,' she gasped, and then she blushed scarlet. I stared at her.

"'Why not?' I asked. 'It 's the queerest thing I ever heard of, the way he has dropped an old friend. My conscience is clear, and something 's wrong, and I 'm going to know what it is.'

"She wriggled.

"'Priscilla,' I said, sternly, 'you know something about Jack—something that explains the whole thing.'

"She vowed she did n't.

"Priscilla should never lie. Of course, her efforts are all wrong morally, and then they are so crude that they have n't any artistic value.

"I took her by the shoulders and fixed her with an eagle eye. She opened and shut her mouth helplessly and began to cry.

"'It was n't my fault,' she said. 'I never guessed; and it was perfectly ridiculous, and ——'

"She 'd be stringing words yet if an auroral dawn had n't occurred in my alleged brain.

"'You don't mean that it was you all the time?' I gasped.

"She was a picture of guilt. One might have thought she had our spoons in her pockets.

"She plumped down on the floor and hid her face in my lap.

"I was paralyzed for one thunderstruck moment. Then I howled for glee.

"Priscilla looked up at me with a weak, watery smile and asked me if I was angry.

"Angry?—Why I would n't have missed it for worlds. The more I thought about it the funnier it got. It was such an all-embracing joke.

"Everybody was in it.

"Think of Jack's impotent rage, when Priscilla kept sliding out and leaving him alone with me. Think of mother being Machiavellian and having her hopes. Think of Priscilla religiously keeping out of the way.

"And, oh Bobby, think of me, sitting up nights to decide whether I 'd better marry him, and sheering him off from a proposal, while all the time he was trying to screw up courage to tell me he was madly in love with Priscilla."

"How did Priscilla find out the truth?" asked Bobby with a sympathetic chuckle.

"Jack met her on the street. He took her into the Park and uncorked his soul. It was a volcanic eruption. He had loved her at first sight, she must know it. Every

one must have known it. He could n't live without her. She was heartless, cruel.

"She told him she had thought I was it,—that we had all thought so. That stunned him. Poor Jack! Priscilla vowed she would never see him again, and then ran home and cried all night. It was a tragedy to her. It never entered her head that I would think the thing funny.

"I'm glad I'm not built upon proud or tragic lines, Bobby.

"I wrote to Jack that night and told him that I would forgive him for trifling with my young affections, and that if he'd kindly come up and make love to Priscilla I'd take the war correspondent out for a walk and try to repay well meant services.

"He came. They are engaged.

"If any young man wants me to believe he is in love with me now, he has to swear to it, before a notary. I 'm not staving off any proposals. Let them all come. I don't know whether they are mine or Priscilla's until it 's all over."

OUT OF THE WEST

VI

OUT OF THE WEST

"YOU have n't heard about the Texan, Bobby. I 've been improving the shining hours while you idled at Palm Beach. Out upon you, drone!"

"'One more unfortunate'?" asked the man who came often. "Where is the victim?"

Nancy sighed.

"I don't know."

"But, gracious powers, I 've been gone only a week. Don't tell me you 've allowed a guilty man to escape!"

Bobby's tone was distinctly hopeful. He longed to hear that some resolute fellow-man had resisted Nancy's wiles and vindicated his sex.

Nancy's upper lip took on a pathetic droop. It is an interesting upper lip. It smiles, and weeps, and is angry before any other part of the face wakens.

"He stayed only one day," the young woman said mournfully, "and things were just becoming so interesting."

"I could love that Texan like a brother," murmured Bobby fervently.

"But he made considerable progress while he was here," twinkled Nancy. "They do these things better in Texas. They evidently understand the value of time down there. Their ideas don't develop by geological formation. They are quick on the trigger, these Texans."

"It 's a habit they contract through social relations with horse-thieves," said the man who came often. "Did this Texan drop from a clear sky, or did he blow in with Buffalo Bill?"

"The Rollinses captured him. Then they did n't know what to do with such big game, so they sent for me. Mrs. Rollins wrote a most beseeching note. She said Jim — that 's her husband, you know — was mixed up with this Texan in some big deal, and they had to do things for him. They were to dine at Delmonico's that night, and she really could n't bear the brunt alone. She was sure I could put the man at his ease, and she would be everlastingly indebted to me if I would come to her rescue; but she feared she was imposing on me, for Jim said the guest was intensely Western.

"'But he made considerable progress while he was here,' twinkled Nancy"

"Now, Bobby, Mrs. Rollins was a Bostonian before she fell from grace and married a New York man. I knew that what Jim probably did say was that the Texan was a 'corker — a wild and woolly Indian.' That 's Jim's style, but translation into Bostonese does soften the outlines of language.

"I had been awfully dull. You really should n't leave town in Lent, Bobby. I call it inconsiderate."

"It 's a season for fasting," protested Bobby.

"Well, I 've always insisted that self-mortification can be carried too far. I 'd rather see consistent self-denial throughout the year than one orgy of asceticism. That 's why I don't allow you to come as often as you 'd like during the season, and I don't mind giving you up on Fridays during Lent, but one must have some amusement for the rest of the week evenings, and there 's nothing going on.

"You were at Palm Beach. I needed entertainment. Enter Texan. I call that excellent stage management. The only trouble was that the curtain was hurried. In the words of the poet, 'I only knew he came and went.'

"I wrote to Mrs. Rollins and told her I would be glad to oblige her. It was n't necessary to say that I regarded her as an angel benefactress, but I did.

"She and Mr. Rollins called for me at 6.45.

"When we drove up to the *porte-cochère*, a man who was standing on the steps threw away a cigar, bowled the carriage man out of the way as if he had been a ten-pin, and opened the door for us.

"He was glad to meet us. He said Rollins had proved what he thought of Mrs. Rollins by marrying her, and had said I was the real thing, and he had lots of confidence in Rollins' judgment, so he reckoned our references were good. He 'd about come to the conclusion we were short on appetite. Dinner had been waiting for him since twelve o'clock. They always had noon dinners in Wahoo. A New York woman went down there once and had late dinners. She wanted her nigger cook to come to the door and say, 'Dinner is served,' but the cook drew the line right there.

"Finally some Eastern syndicate men were to dine at the house, and the missis told the nigger she 'd have to announce

dinner or chuck her job. (This is n't my vocabulary, Bobby; it 's the Texan's.)

"Everybody was sitting in the parlor at 6.30 that evening when the door opened and Mammy stuck her head in, looking scared to death.

"'Say, folks, yah dinnah 's dished,' she yelled. Then she slammed the door and ran.

"He told us all this while we were going up the steps. He had n't a comma concealed about him.

"Breezy? A fifty-mile-an-hour-gale is a dead calm compared with him, Bobby.

"He had a voice that was n't exactly loud, but had a queer ringing quality that made it carry wonderfully. I never met 'clarion tones' outside of a poem, but I guess those were clarion tones. He said he had tuned up his pipes riding round and round bunches of cattle and singing to them to keep them from stampeding. His voice was so fresh and clear that it would have been beautiful on a thirty-thousand-acre range, but there seemed to be rather too much of it for Delmonico's.

"Everybody turned to look at the man, and grinned.

"'Is this the modest, shrinking violet I

was to put at ease?' I asked Mrs. Rollins in the cloak-room. She only groaned. Boston and Texas have no points of contact. Now, I thought the man delicious. As for being made conspicuous — well, I had on my pink cloth. That gown could stand the bright white light that beat upon the Texan and his party.

"We found a table. Bill dominated the room.—No, I did n't call him 'Bill'; but that 's what the boys call him in Texas, and it fits him much better than his conventional title.

"Bobby, he was the biggest thing I 've ever seen. He was miles high, and broad proportionately, and yet he did n't seem to have an ounce of superfluous flesh. He looked as though he had been made out of whalebone and rawhide. Everything about him worked on springs. I would n't have been surprised to see him pull out a six-shooter and begin snuffing the candles, or get up and play leap-frog over the tables. It was like playing with an electric dynamo to associate with him. He seemed to have limitless possibilities of explosion. I never realized before how smooth-running and colorless the ordinary man is.

"No one else in the room tried to talk. Our wild man from Wahoo held the floor, from oysters to coffee. He did n't pay much attention to Mrs. Rollins, and he dropped Mr. Rollins with the *entrée*. After that my only rival was the head waiter. The conversation was addressed to us. Bill's vocabulary was n't like any English I knew, but we always seemed to catch his meaning. So did the waiters. So did everybody in the room except an exquisite Frenchman, who sat at one of the tables near us and stared at the Texan as if hypnotized. I 'd like to read that Frenchman's *Impressions d'Amérique*. We 'll be in it.

"Bill was n't wearing evening clothes, but he did n't care. His foot was on his native heath, and he patronized us all, including the head waiter.

"I 've always been afraid of that head waiter myself, and I felt that I could love a man who was n't awed by him.

"We had a vanishing procession of waiters all evening. One came and stood by the table, looking like a wooden image until, suddenly, his face began to twitch, and he showed signs of apoplexy. Then he fled, to save his professional reputation, and an-

other took his place. The continuous performance bothered Bill, and he called the head waiter.

"'Old man,' he said, 'your boys are n't on to their job. It makes me dizzy, this trying to keep track of our man. You ought to get niggers. They 'll bear watching, but they beat anything for waiting on table. I used to have a nigger in Texas—a nigger and a Chinaman. They ran the shack, and, say, they were the smoothest combination I ever saw.'

"I wish you could have seen that head waiter, Bobby. He looked most unhappy. His dignity was tottering to a fall, and yet he wanted to stay and see the thing through. Duty triumphed. He tore himself away. Our Texan was disappointed. He liked that head waiter — said he had an expression a good deal like that of a friend of his who was shot in a little card-table difficulty last fall. 'Nothing could make a muscle of Jack's face quiver,' he added.

"The head waiter being gone, he finished his story for my benefit. The nigger and the Chinaman stole him blind, Bobby, but they certainly did make him comfortable while they were doing it.

"They would do anything—including Bill. They fell over each other to wait on him. Then, when he went away, they fell over each other running for loot. John worked harder, but Sam was smoother. The nigger generally got there first, but the Chinaman was thorough, when he did arrive. Bill had the finest driving-horse in that part of the country. Sam used to hitch up that horse, the moment his master's back was turned, and take his dusky damsels driving. John went one better. He could n't get the horse as often as Sam did, but when he did get him he took the horse and buckboard out to the darkey camp-meeting, two miles from town, and hired them out at twenty-five cents a drive.

"He was thrifty, that Chinaman. I hope you are interested, Bobby."

"Absorbingly interested. It strikes me that for once in a way a man is starring and you are only leading lady. It 's refreshing. Your plays are n't usually cast that way."

"Look at Bernhardt in 'Roxane!' I, too, can be noble. I dare say, though, that she thinks *L'Aiglon* and *Hamlet* are dramas greater than *Cyrano*

"Well, to go back to domestic affairs in the shack. Bill finally got hot and fired the whole shooting-match. That 's the way he put it.

"'After they had gone,' he said, 'I found there was n't much left. I had n't a stitch of clothes except what I chanced to be wearing. It was big luck that I happened to have on a coat that day. Still, you ought to have niggers here. These gentlemen with sky-blue upper lips don't know the game.'

"He was beautiful, Bobby. I wanted to buy him, so that I could take him out and play with him whenever life grew dull. One would need a strong box for him between whiles, though.

"I smiled on him—my very best smile."

"Poor, lucky beggar," commented Bobby, paradoxically.

"I urged him on. I 've never seen anything so untrammelled, so sublimely unconscious as that Texan. He had n't an idea that he was attracting attention. I expected him to make breaks about the dinner. He did n't. He took the weird French concoctions as calmly as if his darkey and Chinaman had served them to him every day down in the Texan shack. There was n't

even a touch of awkwardness about him. He would sit down at a royal table with cheerful unconcern. I 'm sure of it.

"It 's fine, Bobby — that vigorous, direct manhood that looks, clear-eyed, at life, and sees only the realities. I wonder if it takes broad horizons and broader freedom to make such men. Do we raise them here, between brick walls?"

"We breed the strength and the sincerity here sometimes — never the freedom," said the man who came often, and Nancy missed the smile from his voice.

There were times when the Bobby whom she teased suddenly grew up and made her feel very young and foolish. She never encouraged the pose, but in her heart she liked it. The normal woman will look up to a man, even if she has to sit down in order to do it.

Still, being a woman, Nancy tacked, and bore away from seriousness.

"We took him to the theatre," she went on lightly. "He kept quiet while the curtain was up, but between the acts he entertained every one within six rows of us.

"He did n't rave over the star. She could n't hold a candle to me — in fact, he

had n't seen any one who could. He thought I 'd like Texas. The prettiest girl in Wahoo had miles of cow-ponies hitched in front of her place every evening, and she could n't even be entered in the same class with me.

"Subtle, was n't it? And yet, Bobby, somehow or other it was n't banal or vulgar. He said I was pretty, just as he would have said that grass is green or that skies are blue.

"I knew he believed what he said, and, since it was true, he could n't see any reason for wrapping it round with subtleties. The compliment of civilization is one of the most perfect exponents of decadence, Bobby. It is a concession to false ideas of delicacy. It says, 'If I speak directly, she will know I am lying. I must be discreet.'

"A direct compliment is n't vulgar if it is genuine. We consider all direct compliments vulgar. You can draw your own conclusions."

"Nancy," said the man who came often, speaking with slow deliberation, "you have the most adorable eyes and the most kissable lips I ever beheld. I 'll swear to it before a notary. Therefore you have no right to resent my direct, unvarnished statement."

He caught a cushion dexterously, and scored one.

"Let us return to our simple and guileless friend William," he urged.

"Of course you would n't understand him," said Nancy hotly. "He would have little in common with a New York broker."

"But I gather from your story that William and I have much in common," objected Bobby. "Our opinion of your eyes and lips, for instance."

"He did n't mention my eyes or lips."

"Then he is n't the man I took him for. I 'm afraid this new friend of yours merely goes in for glittering generalities. A man of specialized detail is the man to tie to, Nancy. What did he mention?"

"He told me about Texas. He actually lowered his voice to do it; and, Bobby, do you know, he positively made me homesick for the place. He could make one feel the sweep and the breadth and the freedom of it—and I wanted to breathe.

"But I smoothed my Paris frock and played with my lorgnette chain, and tried to remember that New York probably wears better than Wahoo.

"He was born twenty-seven miles from

Wahoo, Bobby. Isn't that awful? To be born in Wahoo is bad enough, though I don't know anything about the place, except its name.

"But to be born twenty-seven miles from Wahoo! That opens up a dismal vista of desolation and isolation. We left him in front of the theatre. He held my hand quite a long time."

"Did n't kiss you good-night?" inquired Bobby, briskly.

Nancy flushed angrily.

"He certainly did not."

"Oh, tut-tut. A Texan and afeared?— and he so simple and direct in his methods, too! What about the next day?"

"Well, the next morning, before I was up, Mary staggered in with a perfect cart-load of American Beauties, and while I was dressing a five-pound box of chocolates came."

"In their ultimate form of expression all methods of courtship look alike to me," mused Bobby.

"Then, just as I was breakfasting, Bill was announced. He came out and watched me drink coffee. He was n't in the least embarrassed by finding that he had called

before breakfast. He had been up for five hours, and he looked preternaturally wide-awake; but he did n't talk so much as he did the night before. I did most of the talking."

"Probably he had just discovered that your innocent prattle has its good points. Did you talk to him about other men? I have a taste for that sort of thing—a carefully cultivated taste—but some men are unreasonable and primitive in their tastes. I 've an idea your Texan would n't enjoy hearing about other men."

"We talked about — well, about ideals and things."

Bobby nodded understandingly.

"Yes, I know those ideals."

"He has the most beautiful ideas about woman."

"That is n't indigenous to Texas, Nancy. It 's eternal masculine. It 's a feature of the universal kingdom of youth."

"You are getting old, Bobby.

"I have ideas about a woman instead of having ideas about woman. That 's the only difference."

"But my Texan was awfully interesting," said Nancy hastily. "We went for a walk

in the Park. He did n't like it. He said he would butt his head against the biggest tree he could find and go mad if that were all the country within his reach. I don't think I ever saw a man fret against things before."

"We do our fretting inside in the effete East."

"No, you don't fret that way. You are used to things."

"Men are never used to things, little girl. Men endure things."

Nancy shook her head. Women seldom understand.

"We went riding together in the afternoon. He borrowed Mr. Rollins' saddle-horse, but he was n't very grateful. He said it looked well, but that it was n't bridle wise, and that it had a gait like a tipsy camel.

"He breathed fire when I would n't ride fast, because it would be conspicuous and the police would n't approve, and he thought the men and women on trotting-horses were horrors. He said the Lord's original plan kept me from looking foolish, but that he 'd like to pick me up and carry me down to the ranch, and teach me to ride.

"Shades of my German riding-master! —and I was a star pupil!

"I 'd like to ride across that ranch, though, Bobby—with a good cow-pony under me, and the prairie billowing off to the horizon line on every side of me, and the birds whirring out of the buffalo-grass at my feet—with no noise but the thud of the horses' hoofs and no one within sight but the comrade riding with me. One could get away from shams down there, Bobby, and live—live!"

Her eyes were burning and her cheeks were aflame.

"Bless her dear restless heart!" said the man who came often, and knew her. "We all want the gallop; but the sun down there is intolerable, and the grass burns up, and there 's not a tree to cast a shadow. The life is rough, and the food is coarse, and the days are long and lonely. It 's a big heart that is sufficient to itself, little woman, and we can't always be galloping across a green prairie on a cool, clear day —not even if one lives in Texas."

He had grown up again.

Nancy's eyes were wistful.

"I know. One never finds it anywhere —but one goes on wanting, and I liked the ring of my Texan's prairie song."

A moment's silence, and Nancy continued:

"He came to the house that evening. I went down to see him, and he stayed for half an hour. I don't think he said five words, but he sat, looking me straight in the face, with a queer doubt growing in his eyes.

"I did n't quite understand. I was horribly nervous. He was n't like any one else. I could n't treat him as I treat other men.

"Suddenly he got up. He filled the room, Bobby. He did n't look at me then, but stared at an absurd Japanese bronze on the table. His lips were set in a straight line. There was something wrong with my breath, Bobby. A foolish thought that he looked rather like the head waiter and 'Jack' went floating through my head, and I wondered how women who have hysterics feel.

"'I came up to ask you for something,' he said, 'but I was a fool. I 'll go back to Texas to-night. I 've got to ride it off. Good-by.'

"He did n't even take my hand. He bolted, and I heard the door slam. Now an Eastern man—what would an Eastern man have done, Bobby?"

"Held on like grim death and waited," said the man who came often.

"But he was sensible — very sensible. One does n't buy an impressionist's picture for one's living-room. The academicians wear better," sighed Nancy.

A LOVE SOUVENIR

VII

A LOVE SOUVENIR

NANCY left town early one season. Friends were going to White Sulphur about the first of May, and she decided to go with them. An inflammatory youth from old Virginia was also moved to seek rural shades in the May time. No man of discretion should recklessly expose himself to the influence of springtime, sylvan rambles, and pretty girls. The combination would have been too strong for Zeno. Even a Vermont man would be in danger of attack from the sentiment microbe under such conditions, and as for a Virginian—well, his fate was a foregone conclusion.

The time was May. The place was White Sulphur, and the loved one was Nancy. If it had n't been Nancy it would have been some other girl. Given the time and place, the loved one is a minor detail. That philosophical fact being accepted, the amorous Virginian should be glad that the fates filled out his unities so harmoniously, and that he

had so good a run for his money; but, at last reports, this soothing feature of the situation did n't appeal to him, and Nancy considered him distinctly ungrateful. Personally, the young woman does n't approve of Virginian methods. They are so uncomfortably sudden, she sadly says. Of course, when a summer flirtation begins with May, one can't reasonably expect it to wear throughout the whole season; but there 's no use in reckless extravagance and in doing the thing up in four weeks. They do these things better at Bar Harbor.

The young Virginian is n't really the hero of this tale, but his springtime susceptibility brought about the events, and his Danish Mastiff did the rest. The dog entered upon the scene of action at Richmond, where the Virginian made his acquaintance upon the station platform. The mastiff was an overgrown and vicious-looking pup, who was stirring things up for the baggage agent and the dog fancier who had come to get him. The young Virginian, whose pockets are well lined, and who knows a thing or two about dogs, interfered, and the obstreperous pup, whose name was Rex, recognized a congenial spirit and took to the stranger in

a way that won his heart. The young man turned to board his train. The pup was determined to go with him, and once more there was war upon the station platform. The traveller, being in a melting and butter-hearted mood, attributable to the season, was touched by his conquest of canine affection. He looked the brute over, listened to his pedigree, which was as long as a country parson's sermon, and offered the perspiring and irate dog fancier $150 for the dog. The offer was promptly accepted; and in five minutes the traveller had resumed his journey to White Sulphur with an affectionate but rather freakish companion. As Nancy often remarks, "These Southern men are so impulsive."

Two days later Rex and his master met Nancy. That was the beginning of the end. The master approved of the young woman, the dog tolerated her, and Nancy adored—the dog. A dog is a useful third party in affairs of this kind. He affords an opportunity for a display of guileless and ardent affection that is an effectual promoter. Nancy had known men and dogs before.

The three strolled together, sought secluded nooks together, bayed at the moon

together. Rex had to be sternly repressed at frequent intervals, but he was devoted to his master, who had clinched his devotion with a wholesome fear by several sound and thorough thrashings after acts of disobedience. So the dog stuck to heel and passed chickens, cats, cows, children, and other dogs with no greater evidence of emotion than a furtive wriggle. Moreover, he sat like a tranquil lamb with Nancy's arm around his neck and only rolled his eyes pathetically at his master in pained protest. There are things no fellow should ask a dog to do.

So things went for four weeks. Then something happened. Rex was n't responsible because he was n't along; but there was a full moon and a rustic seat, and Nancy went to her room at 11 o'clock and cried so violently that she could n't go down to breakfast the next morning. The only satisfaction her alleged chaperon could get out of her was the statement, between sobs, that men were horrid, hateful, unkind, unreasonable things; but a chaperon of experience can figure out a good deal from that. In the morning a note was handed to Nancy. She cried some more.

"I am going on the midnight train," wrote the inflammatory Virginian. "You have spoiled my life for me, but it is a satisfaction to think that the process afforded you amusement for four weeks. I am leaving Rex for you. You seemed to care for the dog. Perhaps that was a mere seeming, too; but I could not bear to look at the brute again, because he is associated with you.

"Nasty temper these Southern men have," said Nancy, wiping her eyes. "I 'd hate to marry one of them. Now a Northern man would have said it was all his fault, and that he should never have dared to dream that I could love him, and that I would be a sacred memory, and all that sort of thing. Don't talk to me about Southern chivalry. Give me Bar Harbor."

"What are you going to do with the dog?" asked the chaperon practically.

"Oh, he 'll be all right," the girl said carelessly. "Poor fellow," she added, ambiguously, dabbing cologne water on her eyes and sighing deeply.

"It looks to me," said the experienced and suspicious chaperon, "as if that broken-hearted and guileless young lover were in a fair way toward getting even."

Nancy's income is n't large, at best, and hotel expenses had been playing havoc with a bank account already depleted by organdy frocks, picture hats, and other ammunition. But after the passing of the Virginian the financial situation became tragic. An active, voracious, and bad tempered mastiff at a swell hotel is a proposition that calls for gold, yea, for much fine gold. Nancy found that out the morning after the storm, when, with suspiciously pink eyelids, she strolled down to the stables to look at her dog. She had had some idea of sitting down beside the great, clumsy, forsaken brute, and putting her arms around his neck, and dropping a tear upon his faithful head, for remembrance sake. The sentiment appealed to her, and her artistic soul suggested that she and the dog would make rather a fetching tableau. It seemed a pity that the stablemen would be the only spectators ; but a genuine artist loves art for art's sake. Still, when the young woman discovered the German baron waiting in the stable door for a mount, she could n't help feeling that Providence was kind. Unluckily, the programme did n't turn out exactly as planned. Rex had no soul for art. The stablemen had made him

"'Nasty temper these Southern men have,' said Nancy,"

tired, and his master had n't turned up, and when Nancy appeared and ordered him unchained, he promptly knocked her down and jumped on her in playful sport. When the baron and the riding-master pulled him off, the radiant vision in organdy and pink roses looked sadly demoralized.

That night Nancy sat down and did sums. Then she went to the office and changed her second floor corner room for a small one on the fourth floor back. She was paying for a box stall in the stables. The hotel was charging her an absurd price for dog board. One of the grooms, for a liberal consideration, had agreed to look after the dog's general comfort. The cook, for $1 a week, would keep on preparing the menu that the Virginian had laid down for his dog; and Nancy's own waiter thought, under persuasion, that he could conscientiously promise to take three meals a day out to the box stall. The chaperon grinned, and Nancy's compassion for the lovelorn Virginian waned; but, as she said, one could n't allow an innocent dog to die, just because he came high.

The groom, who knew a good deal about dogs, and spoke as one having authority

said that the pup must have exercise ; so Rex was turned loose and promptly chewed holes in a valuable Italian greyhound belonging to a New York millionaier. Only Nancy's face prevented a suit for damages.

After that the dog's promenades were taken at the end of a chain, but he developed a violent dislike for the groom in charge and, in fact, for every one on the premises, except his owner.

She bent her shoulders to the burden and began taking him for his daily walk.

There was infinite variety in the performance. Incidentally, there was tremendous entertainment for the other inmates of the hotel.

Occasionally, a slim, pretty girl in a crisp gown walked calmly past the hotel verandah, leading a huge and tractable dog. More often, the morning quiet was shivered by a sound of skurrying, scampering, barking, scolding, protesting; and by the verandah swept a whirlwind of dust, in which might be vaguely seen an immense, straining, struggling mastiff, dragging after him, at chain length, a breathless, red-faced, stormy-eyed young woman.

The apparition shot down the driveway

and vanished on the road; and there was a mighty chuckling on the verandah.

At the end of a quarter-mile, Nancy usually dropped off of the chain, and her amiable love souvenir roamed at large through the country, while she followed in his wake thinking desperately of her responsibility and of the rack and ruin that might be laid at her door.

Rex was n't really vicious—playful rather, but his idea of humorous sport did n't find favor in the community. He chased cats, chickens, children, horses, cows, with impartial zest. He caused one runaway after another, and on one occasion ran the luckless German baron into a swamp, where his horse stuck hard and fast. But dogs were his specialty. He was spoiling for a fight continually, and even an ignoble conquest had its charm for him. He would have welcomed a foeman worthy of his steel, but there was n't a dog in the place who was more than half his size, so he had to get what amusement he could out of smaller fry. Most of the dogs at the hotel and cottages were of the lap-dog variety—delicate little darlings who were too precious to be left at home by travellers. King Charles spaniels,

cocker spaniels, skye terriers, all looked alike to Rex, and half the women in the hotel froze poor Nancy with gorgon glares and talked angrily about her in corners, while the men's resentment was tempered by sympathy.

"Why, oh why," wailed Nancy "has n't some one on the premises a pet bulldog. Swells to burn and not a bulldog among them. It would n't happen once in a thousand times."

"Indeed, Miss, you 'll have to have him shot," chorused the stablemen and the hotel proprietor.

"If she had any sense of decency she 'd have the nasty brute shot," snapped the women.

"She 'd better have him shot before he kills some one," said the men.

Nancy, being a woman, would n't listen to the suggestion of violent and sudden death. Rex was fond of her in spite of his pranks, and women are soft hearted—about brutes.

"Why don't you send him away?" inquired kindly men.

"Where in the world would I send him? I board in the city," she groaned.

"Well, sell him. He 's a fine fellow, but

you could afford to take little or nothing for him."

"Sell him!" with desperate scorn. "Don't you suppose I 've had every man in the stables trying to give him away. I 'd pay any one to accept him as a gift."

"Well, then, you 'll have to have him shot."

It always came back to that.

The thing went on for two weeks. Nancy was becoming thin and hollow-eyed, and the harmony of the neighborhood was shattered into bits. Rex was finally and permanently shut in his box stall. One Sunday morning he escaped. Nancy starting to church in a symphony of pearl and white heard a scuttle, a growl, an agonized yelp. She dropped her prayerbook and fled around the corner. There was Rex. There in his jaws was the shivering, hairless, Mexican pet of a wealthy old dowager. There was the limp but frantic dowager. There were the cook, three waiters, one groom, and a crowd of minor satellites. The Mexican idol yelped, the dowager screamed, the men yelled. Nancy plunged into the fray and broke her pearl-colored parasol over her dog's head. He never noticed it.

"Save him! Save my darling!" shrieked the dowager.

"Kill him. Kill the brute," moaned Nancy.

An athletic young man in outing flannels hove in sight round the corner, removed his pipe from his mouth, and stared. Nancy looked at him through streaming eyes.

"Kill him!" she implored tragically.

He slipped the pipe into his pocket, gave one more appreciative glance to Nancy, and picked up a stick of firewood that lay beside the kitchen steps. A moment later Rex lay stretched on the ground stunned. The dowager, sobbing hysterically, gathered up the Mexican fragments. Nancy limply collapsed upon the curbstone. The young man stood beside her and watched the dowager with bewilderment in his eyes.

"Why, I thought the little beast was yours," he said to the girl at his feet.

"No, the big beast was mine," she murmured feebly.

"Oh! by jove. No! I—I beg your pardon, I really did n't—you see you said 'kill him,' and you looked at me, and ——"

She looked at him again.

"I 'm afraid you did n't kill him," she said

sadly. Then she told him the story of her life since the arrival of the dog, suppressing various details whose omissions rather spoiled the story, but in which she could n't expect the young man to be interested. He was most sympathetic.

"Why, it 's a shame, a deuced shame. What were all the men doing?" he raged in fine indignation. "See here, Miss, Miss—"

"Reynolds," supplied Nancy.

"Ah, yes, thank you. See here, Miss Reynolds. Let me buy that dog."

She dimpled at him in radiant gratitude.

"Oh, will you let me give him to you?" she urged, in the tone of one who sees a great light in darkness.

He went to the office and sent this telegram to his business partner:

"Look out for dog by express. Turn him over to Smith's trainer."

That afternoon an express wagon rattled down the hotel drive and a crowd watched its going. In it was an immense crate and from the crate floated back upon the wind the despairing howl of a vanquished and abused mastiff.

From the edge of the woods Nancy saw

the wagon vanish over the hill. A moment later the dog's new owner joined her.

"Well, that 's settled," he said, comfortingly.

"You are so good." The tone was dangerous. The glance was more dangerous. "Where is your home?"

The question was irrelevant, but the champion of dames answered promptly:

"New York."

"Ah," said Nancy. "I 'm so glad you are n't from Virginia."

WHERE FRIENDSHIP CEASES

VIII

WHERE FRIENDSHIP CEASES

ROLLINS and Ormsby are not on good terms. The situation is complicated by the fact that the two men are joint owners of a bachelor apartment, near Washington Square, and even if they go out to meals and leave their cook to a life of inglorious ease, they are fairly sure to fall over each other in the hall, several times a day.

The obvious moral of the tale seems to be that no Damon and Pythias should strain the bonds of mutual liking to the point of living together. The Elysian Fields could never live up to their reputation if the Blessed were expected to breakfast in company. Still this Washington Square apartment scheme worked beautifully for months. It would still be running smoothly, on pneumatic tires, were it not for Nancy,—and though that young woman is n't to blame she will be held responsible for the trouble. The woman is always held responsible for

the trouble. Adam and the man who perpetrated "*cherchez la femme*" have established precedents infinitely soothing to their sex. Nancy's plea of not guilty would influence no masculine jury; but, in point of fact, the fates and the telegraph company worked Rollins' undoing.

There have been many festive dinners at the bachelor apartment. Rollins and Ormsby gave them together, or thought they did. In reality, Watkins, the English butler, gave the dinners. He allowed the other two men to invite the guests but reserved critical rights even in regard to that detail.

The dinners did Watkins credit. Watkins did not feel that the chosen guests invariably reflected credit upon the hosts. As he once remarked to a sympathetic cook, "Young men will be young men, Mrs. Ruggles, and the ladies of the stage I can understand ma'am, but them literary people!" Rollins himself is guilty of poetry in his irresponsible moments but Watkins overlooks that — "for his father was a gentleman, Mrs. Ruggles, and, no matter what goes wrong, blood will tell."

It was only a month ago that Miss Rey-

nolds' name drifted into the bachelor apartment conversation. Rollins was responsible for its début. Many feminine names had dawned and faded upon the apartment horizon, and in Reynolds alone there was nothing portentous; but, taken in conjunction with an unwonted anxiety as to neckties and a forced and unnatural blossoming of sonnets, the name was alarming. Ormsby became interested.

Rollins' peculiar uncommunicativeness increased the interest.

Miss Reynolds was, apparently, the only bona fide specimen of the real thing in the Boroughs of Manhattan and the Bronx, but Rollins' air suggested that she was put away securely in a time-lock safe of which he alone knew the combination.

When the respective stars of Rose and Margaret and Ruth and Gladys and their sisters were in the ascendant, Rollins had sung the young women's praises early and late; had talked of the loved ones *ad nauseam;* had taken Ormsby to call, so that he too might worship and adore.

But, until a week before the peace and harmony of the apartment were rent asunder, Ormsby did n't know whether Miss

Reynolds had a given name. He had labored for weeks before finding out whether she was blonde or brunette. Her local habitation was a sealed book. To suggestions that she should be included in dinner invitations, Rollins was deaf.

Ormsby concluded that the matter was serious, and felt flattered by the logical conclusion that Rollins considered him dangerous. He even studied his good-looking face carefully in his mirror, and decided that Rollins really was n't such an ass as one might think. Then, one day Ormsby's father came to town. Now Ormsby's father is an institution, — an institution for which his son and heir entertains a profound respect. The amount of his fortune demands respect. So does his gout. But, as Ormsby, junior, often says, it is the old gentleman's vocabulary as adapted to his gouty hours that commands enthusiastic admiration. It would win humble reverence from a cigar-store Indian.

When Ormsby, senior, comes to town, Ormsby, junior, dances to strings attached to the gouty foot. He forsakes everything and cleaves to the governor. In direct proportion to the closeness of his cleaving so

does the size of the check which he will receive at parting grow and increase.

Rollins usually protests against the paternal visitations. Having a tailor of his own, he recognizes the exigences of the situation, but he objects to being deprived of his chum's society. However, when on this particular occasion a dispatch announced to Ormsby that his father would spend the week in New York, Rollins bore up like a hero. He even seemed to take on new cheerfulness.

"The old gentleman will get in to-morrow afternoon?" he asked.

"Yes," said Ormsby.

"Then of course you 'll have to dine with him to-morrow evening?"

"Sure thing."

They separated for the day.

The next morning, at the breakfast table, Rollins mentioned casually that he expected a young married couple of their acquaintance to dine with him in the evening.

"Sorry you can't be here, old chap," he added genially.

Ordinarily Ormsby leaves his office at four o'clock, but that afternoon, as luck and the typewriter would have it, he was

shockingly delayed. He had promised to join his father at the hotel at six o'clock. At six-forty-five he rushed home to dress, reflecting gloomily the while that the governor was probably making the air around him violently ultramarine and preparing for the prodigal son a variety of veal that would be swallowed with difficulty.

In the hall he met Watkins. There were no signs of prospective festivity in the dining-room.

"Where 's the dinner party?" he asked, as he jammed pearl studs into a dress shirt.

"The cook left at noon," said Watkins, with the solemn joy of one who announces dire calamity.

"The deuce she did! Then the dinner 's off?"

"Mr. Rollins telegraphed to the guests, sir."

"Where 's Rollins?"

"He 's gone to get the young lady who was coming, sir. He 's going to take her to dinner and to the theatre."

"Young lady! why he did n't say — who was she, Watkins?"

"I could n't say, sir. Mr. Rollins did n't mention the name."

"Mr. Rollins lives here?"

Ormsby was struggling with his tie. He dropped the conversation, also several expressions more forcible than Christian in regard to the man who first invented neckties.

The door-bell rang.

Watkins disappeared.

Ormsby, picking up his overcoat and looking around hopelessly for his opera hat, heard a soft feminine voice saying:

"Mr. Rollins lives here?"

"Yes, miss," came in Watkins' best company accents, "but he is n't in at present, miss."

"Not in!"

There was a note of embarrassment and a whole gamut of surprise in the echo.

"No, miss. He 's gone out to dinner and the theatre."

"But you are entertaining at dinner this evening?"

The embarrassment had deepened. The surprise had melted into consternation.

"I beg pardon, miss, but the cook left, unexpected like, at noon, and Mr. Rollins had to telegraph the guests not to come."

There was a gasp, distinctly audible in Ormsby's room.

He drew aside the curtain and stepped into the hall. Watkins obliterated himself. A Vision in a soft, shimmering pink gown and hood and a long cloak of lace and fur stood in the doorway. Her head was held very high. Her cheeks were uncommonly pink. The gray eyes that met Ormsby's were half indignant, half amused, wholly beautiful.

Ormsby did n't know her. He felt convinced, at once, that not knowing her had been a bit of beastly bad luck.

"I have come to dinner," said the Vision firmly, but with a lurking dimple threatening to dash into the open.

"You did n't get a dispatch from Dick?"

She shook her head. The chiffon hood slipped back, disclosing a distracting arrangement of golden fluffiness rippling into gold brown shadow.

"I was invited to dine here at seven," she said. "Your man tells me the cook is gone. Did you, by any chance, save the chaperon?"

Ormsby's attention was gliding giddily over the ripples but he tried to pull himself into coherence.

"I suppose the other people got their telegrams. Nobody 's here. I don't under-

stand. Dick has gone to — I suppose — he did n't tell — " He was stammering joyously and inwardly cursing himself for a blundering fool. This was Dick's break. There was no reason why he should be embarrassed.

" I think you must be Mr. Ormsby," said the Vision. " My name is Nancy Reynolds."

A great light broke upon Ormsby's brain and an unholy joy took possession of his soul.

So this was Rollins' little game! Verily, the gods were good.

" It is awfully unfortunate," he said feelingly. " There has been some mistake about the telegram. He will be dreadfully cut up."

He did n't mention that Rollins was, at that moment, on his way to take the young woman to dinner and to the theatre. Why go into details?

" I 've sent away my cab. Really you know, it is all rather provoking."

The Vision was evidently irritated. As evidently, her sense of humor was wrestling with her wrath. Moreover, if gray eyes are to be believed, she did not consider

it necessary to visit her anger upon the innocent friend of the guilty Rollins.

Ormsby looked at the eyes, and threw his chum overboard without a shadow of compunction. After all, Rollins had n't played fair.

"I will telephone for a cab, but you must n't stand here in the hall. Wont you come in and wait?"

She hesitated, then followed him down the narrow hall to the drawing-room.

"Perhaps the imposing person who opened the door for me can chaperon us," she said, with a touch of embarrassment. "I 'm afraid it is all distinctly unconventional. Bachelor apartments and a strange young man and no chaperon within seventy blocks. Will you please tell the cabman to hurry?"

Ormsby obeyed orders. It comforted his soul to realize that New York cabmen are impervious to such orders.

After telephoning he sat down across the room from Nancy and gave himself up to the joy of it. For the first time he realized just why he and Rollins had put silvery green paper on the wall. It was in order that a slender figure in rosy pink and a crown of red gold hair might glow and flame

against a green background. Incidentally, he reflected that he had been altogether wrong when he guyed Rollins about buying that impossible old oak chair. Of course it did look more or less like a stage throne, but when there is a chance of entertaining a queen — Only he wished she would n't stroke that carved griffin on the chair arm, and that that other grinning beast would n't lay his head against her soft white shoulder. Some way or other it seemed so d——d impertinent and familiar. There is the makings of a first-rate Turk in Ormsby. He did n't mention his feeling about the griffins. On the contrary, he talked of "shoes and ships and sealing-wax" with laudable gravity. Ormsby is a gentleman, if his tendencies are Turkish. Still, in his heart, he was glad that he had had the forethought to telephone to 63d Street for a cab, instead of ordering one around the corner. A young woman could n't be expected to know anything about the telephone numbers of cab stables, even when she heard them called. Occasionally a mental picture of a gouty old gentleman in a hotel room arose and smote the old gentleman's son with horror, but the awesome vision died away in a glow of rose

pink and red gold. One's readiness to pay the piper depends upon the quality of the dance.

"It 's a terrible grind on Dick," said Dick's chum, with fine relish. Nancy looked pathetic. When Nancy drifts into gentle pathos, men who know her will reach for life-preservers, but Ormsby did not know her.

"My sympathy is all for myself," she said. "Of course this is all very charming," she added, with a glance that neutralized the chill into which her first remark had cast Ormsby and raised his temperature to fever heat, "but—but it really is embarrassing and—" she blushed. Bobby always says that the blush is more fatal than the pathos.

She looked at Ormsby doubtfully. Then with a little outburst of friendly confidence, leaned toward him. "It 's worse than embarrassing," she said; "it 's tragic! My mother has gone out for dinner, and she told both maids they might go and stay until nine o'clock."

Ormsby arose to the occasion. He believed he had evolved a glittering idea without assistance. Bobby would have known better. Ormsby's guardian angel clutched

at his shoulder, but Ormsby shook him off. A gout-inspired torrent of paternal opinion clamored in his ears but could not daunt him.

"I wish—" he began, then paused to take breath, and went on with a rush:

"I wish you would let me take you to dinner. I have n't had mine and I 'd have to dine alone. (Shade of the waiting governor!) It 's such forlorn work dining alone. I 'd be so awfully pleased if you would go with me."

It was out. He looked at her apprehensively. The pink gown and hood and the stunning fur cloak that had slipped from her shoulders all seemed appallingly Philistine and conventional.

Nancy was surprised. Any one could have seen that. She was also shocked—not discouragingly shocked, however. The shading was masterly. She looked at him with her pretty head a trifle tipped to one side. Evidently tradition and inclination were struggling within her. If Ormsby could have remembered a prayer he would have said it. He did start in on one, but he did n't know the rest of it, and, anyway, it did n't seem to fit the case.

"I 'm afraid," said the Vision doubtfully

(Nancy's manner is always most doubtful when her decision is most firmly made), "I 'm afraid it would be very improper."

If only a fear, not a conviction barred the way, Ormsby was ready to fight for his heart's desire.

"Oh, no; it—" he began hotly, but Nancy interrupted him.

"It is n't at all the thing to dine without a chaperon, at a restaurant. Some one I know would surely be there, and these things"—she glanced down at the pink gown and the gorgeous cloak—"are rather conspicuous."

While there was hesitancy there was hope. Ormsby plunged into the breach.

"But I know a very, very quiet little place, near here. You 'd never meet any of your friends there. It 's ghastly respectable and nobody there would notice anything one wore." The last two statements did not tally. The soul of respectability is criticism; but the Vision apparently did n't notice the flaw in the argument.

"If you are quite sure—" she began.

"Positive," swore Ormsby, and his guardian angel spread his wings and fled weeping.

"I 'm afraid it would be very improper."

As the young couple were leaving the apartment, the telephone bell rang furiously. Ormsby went back to the drawing-room, closing the door into the hall carefully behind him. Intuition is a wonderful and valuable thing.

When he took up the receiver, a grin spread across his countenance and bade fair to meet at the back of his head.

"Oh! That you, Dick?" he said, in honeyed tones, carefully lowered.

"What? Oh, yes, she came down here. Did n't get your telegram. Yes; it was awkward; was n't it? I understand how you feel. Yes; I was at home. Lucky, was n't it?—merest accident.

"You thought there might have been some mistake about the telegram? Chance she might have come here? So clever of you, dear boy. If I had your brain, Rollins, I would n't write poetry with it.

"Offended? Oh, not seriously. She 's still here. . . . No, not waiting for you. Don't kill a horse, dear boy. She and I are just going out to dinner. . . .

"Fie, fie, Richard! Such langwidge! So long, old man."

He rang off.

"A business matter," he explained to the Vision when he joined her.

They started once more. Again the telephone rang viciously.

"That," said Ormsby with an air of conviction, "is the governor."

"Are n't you going back?" asked Nancy.

"No; Watkins can attend to it," said Ormsby calmly.

He breathed an inward prayer that the old gentleman might not convict him of murder by expiring in a fit of apoplectic rage, and hurried the Vision down to the 63d Street cab. Later, he paid the piper.

The governor left no check.

Rollins does not speak.

But Ormsby swears that the dance was well worth the price.

A TOUCH-DOWN

IX

A TOUCH-DOWN

"THAT," said Nancy, "was the summer when I had only one proposal."

The man who came often looked from the glowing fire to the glowing face.

"Why did you go to a place where there was only one man?" he inquired drowsily.

Nancy twinkled appreciatively. There is a distinct satisfaction in throwing bouquets to Nancy. She is an uncommonly good catcher, and artistic curves are never wasted upon her.

"Bobby," she said, with an admiration slightly exaggerated, "no one could have done better, at such short notice. You are improving, but you must be very careful. If you keep on this way you 'll be getting subtle, and that would n't match your mouth and shoulders."

She looked at him with a meditative tilt of her fluffy head. He was still blinking sleepily from the effect of the open fire.

Nancy's face cleared.

"It 's mediumistic," she asserted, with the triumphant air of one who solves a puzzling problem. "I 've noticed that your finest efforts always occur when you are in the trance state. Bobby, your control is a scholar and a gentleman. I make him my compliments. I 'd like to meet him in the flesh. Tell him I 'm sorry he passed out before I had a chance at him."

"My control is feminine," said Bobby, with wide-awake emphasis.

Nancy shook her head.

"No. The quality of your trance compliments would suggest that. They are better than the ordinary masculine effort, but I suppose that is because they are purely subjective. One thing is sure, Bobby. No feminine control, no matter how far behind she had left her objectivity, would allow you to make the compliments to another woman. It 's against nature."

The man who came often forsook the big leather chair and stood before the fire. He loomed preternaturally big and broad-shouldered, outlined against the glow, in the gathering twilight, and the small bundle of femininity looked up at him with a whimsical mixture of approval and protest.

"Would you mind sitting down again?" she asked pathetically. "Someway or other you look so monumental and I feel like such an atom. I don't like it. It disturbs my sense of values. I can't be disrespectful to you when you are up there. I 'd as soon think of being impertinent to the Pyramids. I can overlook mental and moral qualities, but sheer size awes me. That 's why I hate going to the mountains. They snuff me out. I can't frivol before them. Six months in the mountains would reduce me to abject cringing humility. Do sit down, Bobby."

Bobby subsided into the leather chair. He could see Nancy's face better from there, which may have accounted for his docility.

"But about that summer?" he asked.

Nancy sighed.

"I struggled against mountains and Aunt Maria that summer. I might have defied the mountains. They were n't very big ones,—but Aunt Maria! Mt. Blanc is a molehill beside Aunt Maria."

"She *is* rather a whale," assented Bobby, cheerfully.

"It is n't her avoirdupois," Nancy said grimly. "She does weigh two hundred pounds, but that 's a mere bagatelle.

It 's her moral force that towers, Bobby. 'Whale!'—why, Aunt Maria would make the leviathan look like a minnow. You 'd understand what I mean if she had ever chaperoned you."

"She left no room on the mountains for men?"

"Exactly. There were men—oodles of them; but Aunt Maria obscured the view. I might as well have been in a nunnery. Now, I approve of chaperons, in a way."

"Well, they are generally in the way," murmured Bobby; but Nancy ignored the interruption.

"Chaperons have their uses," she went on. "So have the commandments. One must have something to break. One must have some one to elude."

"On the same principle one feels an undying gratitude to guide-posts," said Bobby. "They make it possible for one to choose the wrong road beyond shadow of a doubt. Are you so truly good, little woman, that you have to say things like that in order to ward off danger of immediate translation?"

He was smiling, but something in his tone made Nancy blush. There are times when the big quiet man with the honest

eyes makes her feel that she has been guilty of a crime against good taste. It is n't a comfortable sensation, and it moves her to detest Bobby cordially. At least she tells herself that it does.

This time there was no ground for open resentment, so she overlooked the criticism implied.

"Speaking of chaperons—" she began.

"But I was speaking of guide-posts," objected Bobby.

"It 's quite the same thing," Nancy insisted airily. "Both persist in pointing out places to which they 've never been. The giddier a chaperon has been, the more strenuous she is. The only really liberal chaperon I ever had was dear old Aunt Elizabeth, who was such a saint herself that she was tremendously optimistic about other people. Now they do say that Aunt Maria was a terror before she took on so much of the flesh that she could n't travel fast enough to keep up with the world and the devil; but, as a chaperon ——"

Nancy's pause was full of emphasis.

"I should think it would be easy to lose her," Bobby suggested. "She 's too large a body to move rapidly."

Nancy's expression was tragic.

"You don't know her. She 's a contradiction of natural law. I used to believe that no one body could be in two places at one and the same time. That 's a mistake. Aunt Maria can do it. I suppose it 's because there is so much of her. With fifty more pounds she would probably be ubiquitous. She chaperoned me only one summer. One was enough. I did n't choose her, even then. She offered herself up as a sacrifice to family welfare. You see, Reginald Cartwright had devoted himself to me for three months. The family dreamed dreams and saw visions. I 've a very hopeful family, Bobby. Nothing really discourages them. Each season they forget last season's crushing blows, and plan the furnishings for my town house and the arrangement of the state-rooms on my yacht. Hope springs eternal in the parental breast. Aunt Maria believes in the town house and the yacht, but she is n't patient. She approved of Reggy. He had to go to Homburg with his mother in June. Aunt Maria was convinced that if I did n't fly off at a tangent before he could return in September, we could launch the yacht before Christmas. So she chaperoned me.

"Aunt Maria . . has the endurance of the early martyrs."

"That was a great summer, Bobby. Aunt Maria won my undying hatred and my ardent admiration. She was noble. She has the endurance of the early martyrs. Fatty degeneration of the heart is what one has when one's heart swells abnormally, is n't it?"

Bobby sighed.

"There are other names for it," he said impressively, but ruined the effect by joining in Nancy's derisive grin.

"Aunt Maria has fatty degeneration of the conscience," the young woman announced positively. "She must have been uncommonly bad to be forced into such unnatural goodness now."

"Did she have a happy summer?" Bobby asked doubtfully.

Nancy twinkled.

"I did my best for her. She wanted to reduce. I gave her the chance of a lifetime. I did n't stay in one place for five consecutive minutes. I wore myself to shreds. Tire Aunt Maria? Not a bit of it. She never left me except when I was asleep and, I dare say, she sat outside my door then.

"It was maddening at first, later on it grew funny. Men came and men went, but

Aunt Maria went on forever. Every one was absorbingly interested. We were one of the attractions of the place. If the hotel-keeper had had any soul, he would have lowered our rates and given us a commission on entertainment. Guests used to say at breakfast: 'Well, what shall we do this morning,—drive, or row, or fish, or watch the chaperon?'

"When a new guest arrived, they showed him the bottomless lake and Baldhead mountain and—Aunt Maria. Every man who came set a lance at rest against her.

"It was n't that I was attractive. The venturesome masculine spirit merely longed for conquest. It was like one of the nice old tales of chivalry and magic. One knight after another besieged the enchanted castle and fought the dragon. The plain was strewn with dead men's bones, Bobby.

"In a way, I was more popular than ever before, but I could n't be vain over it. I understood that not my personal charm, but a desire to do up the dragon was what made men cry for me. Whenever a new man buckled on his armor, betting ran high. Everybody watched with undisguised glee.

"Teddy Winslow was so excited one

morning when he thought his college chum was going to make a touch-down that he let off a Yale yell and spoiled the whole thing."

"How did you behave?" asked Bobby, suspiciously.

"Like a cherub. There was no use in rebelling; and, after all, Aunt Maria was my aunt, you know, and I would n't enter the lists against her. I remained neutral. I was a shuttlecock; I did n't care what the battledores did with me. If a man could score, by sheer Machiavellian strategy or heroism, I would n't lay a straw in his way; but I developed a positive pride in Aunt Maria. I would n't, for worlds, have interfered with one of her strategic moves. I really sympathized with her in her one defeat."

"Who was the man?" Bobby inquired. He always shows a flattering interest in the heroes of Nancy's stories. She seldom gratifies it, save when the joke is on her.

"You don't know him, Bobby. He was a Western man, with a Harvard-Heidelberg lacquer—a really beautiful being—the sort of a man who always hears 'Hail! the conquering hero comes' playing inside of his head, and keeps step to it.

"He came, he saw, he conquered—Aunt Maria. He had only two weeks, and it took him three days to appreciate the situation. Then the blood of fighting ancestors rose. He 's a relative of Farragut. He quoted 'Damn the torpedoes!' and steamed ahead.

"Aunt Maria complimented him by taking a particular dislike to him.

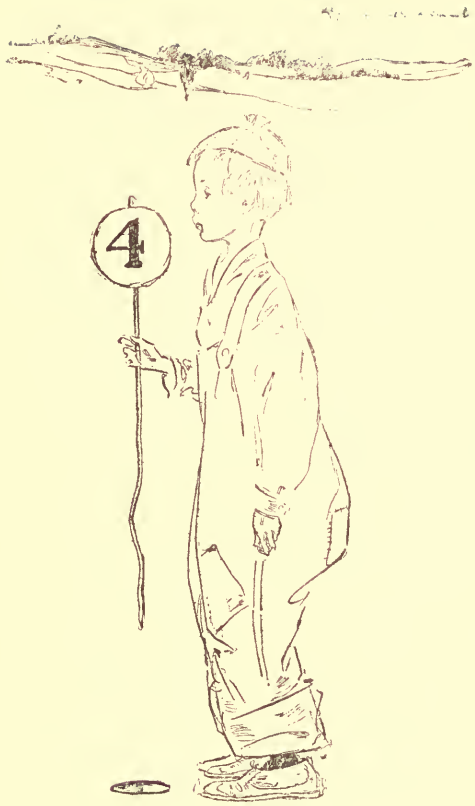
"Don't talk to me about Argus! He was a stone-blind deaf-mute compared with my guardian.

"The Western man and I golfed all day long. Aunt Maria carried a large green umbrella and a look of stolid endurance, and trudged over the links with me. She said she would n't interfere with my pleasures, but she knew her duty.

"I might have had an occasional *tête-à-tête* if I had danced, but the doctor had forbidden dancing that summer.

"You would n't believe that a man and a girl could be in the same hotel for two weeks and never have five minutes alone. Now would you, Bobby? The thing can happen. Ten days went by — eleven — twelve.

"Teddy told me that the Western man had bet him one hundred dollars to fifty that he



"Jimmy my favorite caddy"

would propose to me before leaving. Teddy wanted me to think of some little token of appreciation that he could buy with ten dollars of the hundred and present to Aunt Maria.

"The afternoon of the twelfth day, we were all sitting on the terrace and one of the gardeners killed a garter snake on the lawn below us. Aunt Maria turned green. Somebody ran for water, and somebody else offered smelling salts, and I patted her on the back. She revived, after a while, and apologized, — said she was dreadfully ashamed, but that she had always felt that way about snakes. She was n't afraid of anything else in the world, but the very sight of a snake terrified her beyond words and robbed her of every vestige of self-control.

"Then we talked of other things, but Aunt Maria was still pale, and I noticed that the Western man seemed quiet and thoughtful. After a while he got up and strolled off toward the golf grounds, and, when we went for a drive, a little later, I saw him sitting on a bunker and talking to Jimmy, my favorite caddy.

"The next morning, Jimmy was n't wait-

ing for me as usual. I did n't see him *all* day, and I missed him. I adored Jimmy. He was fourteen years old, and had more freckles to a square inch of face than any other mortal I 've ever seen. There was n't room for many of them on his nose, for it was small and turned up in the most impertinent fashion, but they spread over his forehead and cheeks and neck and ran down in a deep V over his chest, where the two top shirt buttons were always missing. He had a shock of red hair, home-cut, and he wore a scarlet golf cap with a big hole in the crown through which a tuft of red hair waved wildly.

"His eyelashes and eyebrows were perfectly white. He was thin beyond all belief, and his bare legs and arms looked like pipe-stems, but his mouth turned up at the corners in a most delightful way, and his eyes were the funniest, frankest, sauciest eyes ever put into a boy's head. I wanted to buy Jimmy. If Aunt Maria had, for a moment, suspected my real feeling for him, she would n't have had a restful moment.

"That was a long day without Jimmy."

"And the Western man?" added Bobby.

Nancy looked hurt.

"I was n't interested in him. Still one could n't help wondering what had become of him, and why he had thrown up the fight just before the finish. Teddy said he had decided to send to Boston for fruit for Aunt Maria. She loves fruit and the hotel-keeper seemed prejudiced against it.

"At dinner, the Western man appeared, immaculate and in beaming good-humor. I never saw a man less depressed by defeat. He did look a trifle tired, but he explained that he had been off for a long tramp. Jimmy had been showing him the country. He did n't try very hard to be with me. Evidently he had given in to the dragon and intended accepting defeat like a gentleman. Aunt Maria was so gratified that she thawed to him. I saw her offer him her throat lozenges twice, and she smiled all evening.

"Just before we went up-stairs, he asked me quite cheerfully if I would golf with him the next morning. 'I have to go at noon,' he said. Aunt Maria almost looked sorry for him."

"Aunt Maria should read more history," commented Bobby.

"She has a big steel engraving of 'Washington Crossing the Delaware,' hanging

over her bed," said Nancy; "but she was n't expecting a surprise in this siege. She was downstairs with her green umbrella when I went to breakfast the next morning. She and the Western man and I tripped merrily to the links. Jimmy joined us there. Three buttons were gone from his shirt, instead of the usual two. His legs had a few extra scratches, and one trousers leg was damaged beyond repair, but his eyes were dancing to rag-time. I wish you knew Jimmy. He 's very lovable."

"I 'll look him up and study his methods," said the man who came often.

"It is n't method. It 's personality," explained Nancy, discouragingly. "We started out for the first hole,—the man and I in front, Aunt Maria a close second, and, Jimmy ranging far afield. The man was most cheerful. I felt rather hurt by it. The occasion was a melancholy one,—last day, last game, parting at noon. No man with a taste for high art would have grinned like a Cheshire cat around fifteen holes of a golf course.

"After the fourteenth drive, Jimmy developed a new propensity. He simply would n't go on ahead and watch the ball.

"Aunt Maria a close second"

He hung behind, and dawdled around and showed an unnatural love for Aunt Maria's company and conversation. The man did n't seem to notice it, and when I complained, he only laughed and said Jimmy was a queer little cuss and fond of having his own way. Evidently nothing could disturb the creature's good-nature.

"The fifteenth hole is the one farthest from the hotel, quite out of sight of the veranda and terrace. It is in a little patch of meadow-ground, with the woods on one side of it and a low stone fence between it and the hill sloping up toward the hotel.

"We approached and dropped both balls on the green. I took my putter and Jimmy went back to Aunt Maria instead of standing by the hole.

"I glanced at him as he moved away and caught him giving the Western man one long solemn wink. I noticed, too, that he was fumbling at the strap of the pocket in the caddy-bag. I had put my clubs in the man's bag so that one caddy could carry for both of us.

"I gripped my putter and sized up the hole. Suddenly I heard a shriek behind me, and whirled around. For one instant I saw

Aunt Maria stand petrified by terror. A big blacksnake was writhing at her feet and Jimmy was hitting at it heroically with a cleek. There was another wild shriek. Aunt Maria discovered her legs. So did we. She grabbed her skirts firmly on both sides and hoisted them with a fine disregard of conventional prejudice. Then she started for the hotel. You would never believe she could strike such a pace, Bobby. It was phenomenal. Her white stockings simply twinkled over the green. The umbrella was abandoned at the start. Her hat went at the end of the first ten-rod dash. She cleared the stone fence like a bird and flew on up the hill, letting off diminuendo shrieks as her breath gradually gave out. Jimmy ran after her, yelling as though the snake were in hot pursuit. They disappeared over the brow of the hill. My chaperon had altogether failed me. I was left to my fate."

Nancy paused.

Bobby made no remark.

"I suppose," said Nancy, reflectively, after a rich silence,—"I suppose a Western man never loses his fine direct simplicity and assurance, even when Harvard and Heidel-

"With a fine disregard of conventional prejudice"

berg have done their worst for him. On the whole, I believe I like it. It seems to relieve one of all responsibility in dealing with him. Now, a man born to Harvard or Heidelberg might make the fatal mistake of asking permission on starting discussion."

Bobby's under jaw suggested bad temper. Nancy's funny stories often affect him that way. She has reduced it to a science.

"Of course he proposed?"

Nancy smiled sweetly.

"Oh yes, indeed,—very nicely. It would have been a pity to miss it. I did n't accept him. I had a mighty longing to do it, just in order to see how severe a shock western nerve would stand, but I feared complications. We went back to the hotel most amicably. Jimmy met us on the steps. His grin was a thing to conjure with.

"'D' je put in?' he asked.

"The Western man laughed.

"'It was Miss Reynolds's hole, Jimmy,' he said.

"He went away on the noon coach. Aunt Maria came down to see him off and found him so radiant that she lapsed into murky gloom, but she cheered up after Teddy led her aside and told her that the enemy had

proposed and been refused. Teddy was in a position to know. Still, after a talk with Jimmy, his spirits soared superior to his misfortune. He even confided to me that he 'd have given another fifty to see the blacksnake loft Aunt Maria over the fence."

"Where 's Cartwright now?" Bobby asked irrelevantly.

"Married. He fell a victim to an English widow just when Aunt Maria was in the thick of the fray. Pathetic, was n't it?"

"No one keeps you for me when I 'm away." Bobby's tone suggested distinct sulkiness. "I suppose you had all sorts of proposals while you were south this winter."

"Eleven," Nancy announced promptly. "Horrid awkward number, was n't it? I could n't make it twelve without encouraging the elevator boy's hopeless passion. Still the season is n't over yet, and ——"

"Call it twelve, Nancy."

Bobby was smiling again, but his eyes were in earnest.

Nancy's little air of gratitude was touching.

"Now that 's sweet of you," she said effusively; "I 'll feel so much more comfortable about the record, but, Bobby —" She leaned toward him confidentially. Her lips

and dimples were mocking, but there was a soft little light in her eyes. Bobby often wondered whether she looked at the other men so when she refused them.

"Bobby," said the laughing lips, "you are very generous and very brave; does it ever strike you that you are also very rash?"

A SUMMER TOUR IN BOHEMIA

X

A SUMMER TOUR IN BOHEMIA

"A POET?" said Bobby in tones of deep disgust. "Really, Nancy, I think you might draw the line somewhere."

"Speaking of lines," Nancy went on cheerfully, "there was also an artist."

"Good Lord!" groaned Bobby.

"Incidentally, there was a sculptor and a man who wrote problem stories."

"And I 've been abroad only two months."

"It was your going abroad that did it, Bobby. It wakened a longing for travel. I could n't go to Europe. We were too poor even to go to the country. That Wall Street fracas complicated our summer plans dreadfully. I said to myself, 'I really must travel, but it must be a journey without money and without price.' Then I shut myself in my room and concentrated my mind upon a purple iris in a glass vase. (By the way, Bobby, there has also been a yogi,

but that's quite another story.) Did you ever concentrate your mind on a purple iris in a glass vase?"

Bobby shook his head emphatically.

"Well, of course, I really ought to choose something yellow, but I prefer purple. I get just as many ideas when I meditate upon purple, and the ideas are much livelier. After I had put in about fifteen minutes on the iris, I said, 'Go to. I will travel in Bohemia.' I got my tickets from Mrs. Wallace. I was to be personally conducted. When Mrs. Wallace could n't do the conducting, she was to provide a substitute; but I did n't bother her much about substitutes. I furnished them myself. Do you know Mrs. Wallace?"

Bobby did n't.

"What does Wallace do?" he asked.

"He stays at home."

"What does Mrs. Wallace do?"

"She travels in Bohemia."

Bobby sat up very straight.

"Now, Nancy, see here."

"But she's all right, Bobby. She was a Schuyler, but she has a taste for bear leading. She does n't have to live in Bohemia, but she worships at the shrine of genius.

She has at least one rabid enthusiasm each fortnight."

"You seem to have hit her pace," said Bobby rather grimly.

"Exactly; only I doubled up. Sometimes I drove my enthusiasms tandem. You see my time was short."

"Why?"

Nancy blushed; and when Nancy blushes, she is adorable. Then she looked embarrassed. Bobby knows she never is embarrassed, but he always finds the exhibition entertaining.

"Well, I knew that after August I could n't be happy outside the Philistine camp," the young woman said vaguely.

Bobby returned the last day of August.

It was too transparent. He laughed, so did Nancy.

"Tell me all about it," he said, taking out his cigar case. Bobby always smokes cigars, and good ones. Even the most casual observer would never expect him to be guilty of a cigarette.

Nancy put an ash-tray at his elbow, and offered him a sofa cushion.

"It will probably make you very tired," she said sweetly, and he took the cushion.

"Mrs. Wallace gave a dinner," Nancy began.

"A good dinner?"

"Yes."

"That 's not Bohemia."

"No; but it introduced me to Bohemians. They did the rest. I 've been where verses and hair and *vin ordinaire* flowed like water, Bobby; but that came later. Mrs. Wallace's wines are distinctly Philistine."

"Where was Wallace?"

"He had an important business engagement at his club."

"My heart warms toward Wallace," murmured the man who came often.

"I went out to dinner with Mrs. Wallace's latest enthusiasm. Was n't that noble of her, Bobby? He 's a poet, and she had told me that he was the most fascinating being she had ever known. She said he was like the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings were a lute."

"I 'll bet you made the lute play rag-time," said Bobby.

"Not at all. You evidently don't know Bohemia. There are n't any Ten Commandments in Bohemia. There is only one; but that one is, 'Thou shalt not drop thy

"The man who came often"

pose.' It 's fairly inspiring, Bobby, to see how devoutly they follow that one law. Israfel might covet his neighbor's wife and run amuck through the Decalogue, but never, never would he play rag-time. It 's this way. Everybody in Bohemia falls in love early and often, but no good Bohemian ever forgets himself in loving. An egoist rampant on a field purple. There you have Bohemia's coat of arms."

"But he did tune his lute to sing thy praise?" urged Bobby.

Nancy smiled.

"He wrote twenty-six sonnets to me."

"Suffering Moses!"

"I 've never been called out of my name as I was in those sonnets, Bobby. My worst enemy would n't have recognized me. Now, Bobby, tell me seriously. Do you think I have a sinuous, serpentine smile?"

Bobby grinned.

"And would you like to be a pomegranate flower and a marble sphinx and an old-world melody, all in fourteen lines?"

"Well, it 's a good thing to hurry through a stunt like that," suggested Bobby consolingly.

"He found out before we were half through

the soup that my nearness troubled him strangely. He asked if I ever felt a haunting premonition of approaching pain. I told him I seldom felt that until after the salad. Then we talked about the Gospel of Pain. Don't ask me what it is, Bobby. I don't know; but it 's very beautiful. I almost wept over it during the *entrée*.

"We had Maeterlinck with the salad. No; it is n't a cheese. It 's a man who writes prose that makes one yearn, and plays that make one squirm. Either process is a delirium of exquisite pain. The poet said so. Would you rather yearn or squirm, if you had your choice, Bobby?"

"I don't think I 've ever squirmed, and we don't yearn in Philistia. We just want things."

For no apparent reason Nancy blushed. Then she returned hastily to her poet.

"We reached Swinburne by dessert time. You see the agony of protest ended with Maeterlinck and salad. With the nesselrode and Swinburne we resigned ourselves to indigestion, physical and moral. On the whole, I think I liked it better. It 's more restful. Still I did n't like sanguine grapes of sorrow, and purple blood of pain, and

dead sheaves, and ruined fruit, and all that sort of thing with nesselrode. It seemed so messy. I bore up for a while, and then I asked him if he had n't a nice clean little Felicia Hemans bit of verse, by way of cordial.

" He was n't offended. He smiled a beautiful, wistful, far-off smile, and said that a star-eyed, dewy-souled child like me could not be expected to find in her heart an echo to the sob of world agony.

" It made me feel very young, Bobby. He looked at me across a great gulf of years and experience, and yearned for the snows of yester-year. Anybody could see him yearn. There was no mistaking the fact that, personally, he had been steeped in sobbing agony. It was very impressive. It was calculated to make any girl long to be a healing spirit. I quite understood why women called him fascinating.

" Bobby, why do women find an unsavory masculine record interesting ? "

" They don't," said the man who came often. " At least good women don't. It is the hurt of the record that interests them, the possibility of healing. It is romantic, foolish. Men trade on the folly. But when

good women stop yearning over worthless men, God help the world!"

They were silent for a moment. Then Nancy put out a slim little hand and patted his pillow. There were times when she was distinctly fond of Bobby. He apparently did not notice the friendly hand. He had learned to know Nancy.

"And with the coffee?" he asked.

"We had coffee in the drawing-room. The artist was served with it. He was n't really as beautiful as the poet, but then he is very young. He is a symbolist. No; I don't know what it is. That 's just it. If any one knew what it is, it would n't be. The ineffably subtle is what my artist is after. He told me so at once, so that I would n't nurse any vain hope of satisfying his quest. But then, a little later, he decided that my smile had the subtlety of a Da Vinci smile. That 's because it is sinuously serpentine, I suppose. I 'm going to suppress that smile, Bobby. I don't believe it is fit for publication."

The smile was rioting over the piquant face — a gay, wholesome, infectious smile. Bobby watched it with indications of approval.

"A smile is in the eyes of the observer," he remarked, sententiously. "Don't rob the general public because a few Bohemians have astigmatisms."

"It was the next night after that dinner that I really set sail for Bohemia," Nancy went on. "Mrs. Wallace went with me. The man who writes problem novels took us."

"Was he beautiful, too?" Bobby inquired, with fine scorn in his tone.

"Bobby, he was lovely. He looked like a cross between an oatmeal advertisement and a spanked cherub. You never saw anything so round and rosy and innocuous and serious. Psychological! Why, my yogi was n't a circumstance to him. Anything one says sets him off, and if one keeps still, the silence sets him off. He says silence is so full of question that it drives him mad—that he can endure very little of it at a time. And he looks like a mild, benignant full moon when he says it.

"We went to a *table d'hôte* place way uptown. It is the last refuge of the chosen few, the last stronghold of Bohemia. The artist begged me, with tears in his eyes, not to tell any one about it.

"'As soon as it is known,' he said, 'the crowd will rush in and spoil it, as they have spoiled our other haunts.'

"Is n't it pathetic, Bobby, to be so great that the vulgar horde follows one and hangs upon one's words and gestures? There 's something positively epic about that retreat of the Bohemians. It reminds me of all sorts of things in history, only I can't think what they are. Driven back from one rocky fastness to another."

"Rocky they are," agreed Bobby.

"Don't interrupt me when I am seeing noble visions, Bobby. Making one stand after another, only to be pursued and routed. Why, it 's like Homer, or Poland, or the Boer War, or the Tenderloin.

"I suggested to the artist that he ought to make a picture of the devoted band planting their standard on the Harlem height—sort of a Custer's Last Rally group, you know. He did n't think it would be symbolic. He was afraid it would tell a story, and no one who paints a picture that tells a story can be saved.

"It 's a very nice little place, this refuge of the elect. There 's a garden and a long grape arbor and a delightful French *patron.*

He would make an excellent Bloomingdale warden. He believes in humoring them, *ces gens la.* He told me so. He confided in me. It was my hopeless Philistinism that moved him to it, I suppose. He said he had already known *cette espèce* in the Quartier Latin, so he understood them.

"'Ils sont des braves garçons, mademoiselle, mais un peu—vous savez, un peu——'

"I saveyed.

"'C'est toujours comme ça avec les vers et les tableaux. Ils rendent un peu drôle. Mais avec de cœur! Mais oui, mademoiselle. Ah, si on pouvait acheter des poulets avec de cœur!'

"It would be jolly, would n't it, Bobby, if one could buy chickens with good-will in any of the world's markets?"

"It has been done," said Bobby.

"Oh, no, it has n't. Some men think they are doing it, but they always pay in something else, sooner or later—pay to the last farthing."

"How many were eating the chickens on this particular night?"

"About fifteen, I fancy—mostly men. I met them all. It was quite a little family—sort of a mutual relief association. Every-

body was allowed to talk about himself for a certain length of time, provided he 'd give the other man a chance to talk about himself for the same length of time. Reciprocity is a great thing, Bobby. I 've never seen men and women so frankly and absorbingly interested in themselves as those Bohemians. It 's delightful to see such simplicity of motive. I should think Bohemia would n't be complex enough for the problem novelist; but I suppose he goes, not for copy, but for a chance to talk about his copy."

"We seem to have lost the poet," prompted the man who came often.

"Oh, no, we have n't. He was in a corner alone, his eye in fine frenzy rolling—toward me. He wrote the sonnet on the back of an envelope (addressed to him in a feminine hand), and sent it over to me. It was my second that day. He sat up late the night before to write the first one. This second one was most depressing. It seemed there was n't even a faint auroral gleam of sympathy about me. I smiled on all. I was *la belle dame sans merci*, and he suffered cruelly.

"Later he recited some of his poems. It 's

a way they have up there, a Latin Quarter importation, and part of the mutual relief."

"Beastly hard on the artists, I call it," said Bobby. "What do they get for their money?"

"Oh, they just talk about their pictures. The things the poet recited were rather warm for a July evening, Bobby. He went on until the stoutest held his breath, for fear that he would n't stop in time to avoid a raid. Swinburne would have hidden his diminished head and thought himself a cold-storage plant if he could have heard my poet. Everybody drew long breaths when he had finished. Mrs. Wallace was tremulous with rapture. 'What temperament!' she gasped.

"He was quite prostrated after his outburst. So were we. He came over to our table and apologized for being silent. The urge of song is a masterful thing, he says, and leaves a man limp."

Bobby grunted discourteously.

"I don't like your being in it," he said, with a certain decisive set of his jaw.

"But I 've come back to the fold, Bobby. I wandered after strange gods, but now I dwell in the tents of the Philistines, where

the conversation wears rubbers, and the people only do disreputable things. They draw the line at singing about them.

"There was another poet at that *table d'hôte.* He recited, too, but he was n't lurid. His wife said his poetry had a wan, moonlike mystery. He told me that he and a few others had found the secret. Bless you, I don't know what secret. 'Mallarmé was nearer than I,' he said humbly. Your true great man is always modest, Bobby. But his wife smiled and shook her head. It was all very well for him to be modest, but she knew his worth. She begged the problem novelist to help wrap her poet up. They tucked a muffler around him, and put him into a cape that made him look like an anæmic brigand. '*You can't know what a responsibility it is to have the care of such a soul,*' she said to me in italics. Then she took him home."

"Well, at any rate, they were married. I thought that was out of fashion in Bohemia."

"Oh, no, Bobby. You 're all wrong. Most of them are married, but they are dreadfully ashamed of it, especially if they are happily married. It is n't so bad if the marriage is a tragedy or has spoiled a life, or

there are some other extenuating circumstances. There usually are. The poet and the lady who has the responsibility of caring for such a soul assure every one that they married under protest. They thought it a degradation of soul union, but the poet's publishers would have it. They said it was hard enough, at best, to float his books, and the American public would n't stand for an American poet who personally and openly outraged decency."

"They do these things better in France."

"I did meet some Bohemian couples who took a pose of transcendent matrimonial bliss, something sort of subliminal and unearthly. We went to a studio supper one night, and the wife stopped us in the vestibule. She drew the curtains behind her, and put her finger on her lips. She did n't say, 'Hist!' but she looked it. It chilled our blood. We were on the verge of a stampede when she whispered:

"'Hush! He is speaking of his art.'

"We hushed.

"Was n't it lovely?"

"Was n't there any salt in Bohemia, Nancy?"

"Lots of it. Frank, jolly young fellows

who were poor as church mice, but pegging away cheerfully at magazine stories and illustration and that sort of thing. They were usually married and proud of it; and they talked shop, but they did n't believe they were the cream of literature and art. But they are n't real Bohemians. They don't assume the pose. They only eat the cheap dinners."

"Wait till they arrive," prophesied Bobby darkly.

"If they arrive, they 'll shake the dust of Bohemia from their feet, and if they don't arrive, they wont think they have arrived. I like them. They have a sense of humor. That 's why they don't pose as Bohemians. Your Bohemian, so called, has n't really a sense of humor. If he were presented with one, it would be another case of Undine and a soul. He 'd flicker and go out at once."

"But about that poet? He seems to be a wandering minstrel."

"Oh, yes, the poet. He lasted four weeks. I went out to dinner with him often, and we met in the Park — I thought you never squirmed, Bobby.

"It was a trifle hard to get away from 'Arry and 'Arriet in the afternoon, but a

glimpse of primitive methods only accentuated the charm of esoteric flirtation.

"Oh, Bobby, Bobby, why don't you talk to me about star-cool glances and shadow-girdled brows and stirring ghosts of dead dreams?"

"Rot!" exclaimed Bobby.

"Did you ever notice an aureole woven, flower-like, in my hair?"

Bobby eyed the fluffy hair anxiously.

"I 'm afraid you are n't observing, Bobby. That aureole has been seen."

"What became of him?"

"He went away
One summer day,"

Nancy chanted. "It was in August. That was the only graceful Bohemian thing to do. He could n't go on, because he was a trifle afraid of me, and he would n't go back, and there was no fun in standing still. As it was, he had just time to show what he could do in the way of reverential love-making, and then there was a golden opportunity for parting and despair and dumb resignation. I knew the resignation was dumb, for he told me all about it.

"I was left with the twenty-six sonnets

and a sweet memory. The sonnets are to be published in February, so his time was n't wasted, and I need n't reproach myself. Yet they say there is no thrift in Bohemia.

"I asked one of my nice boys why the poet fled. He said the old chap had gone up to Harvard to see his oldest son, and after that was going to Indiana to stay with his wife and family until his creditors got discouraged and quieted down.

"Then the artist — but that 's another story ; and were n't we going out to tea ?"

Bobby rose from the couch, rammed his hands in his pockets, and stood staring out of the window while Nancy put on her hat and veil.

"Your mother ought n't to allow it," he said, turning around and speaking very slowly and distinctly. "Yes, you may laugh, but you ought to show some discretion in your whims. That sort of thing is n't wholesome. It is n't your sort. I tell you I don't like it."

Nancy moved toward him. He fancied she was angry, for her face was serious; but he stood his ground.

"I don't like it," he repeated defiantly.

Nancy stood quite close to him.

"I 'll tell you a secret," she said very softly. "Neither did I." Then she added inconsequently, "Oh, you nice, clean, sensible, ordinary man!"

There was a queer little note in her voice.

Bobby gave the beggar at the corner a dollar.

THE WAY OF A WOMAN

XI

THE WAY OF A WOMAN

A FINISH

"NANCY 'S at home; I 've seen her."

There was a stir on the club verandah.

The young woman who had launched the news bomb smiled sweetly.

The five men who had at one time or another proposed to Nancy looked anywhere save at their fiancées and wives. The one man who had proved immune showed a lively interest.

"Has she changed?"

"Um-m-m, yes. Pretty as ever, you know, and charming, but different."

"Rum go, her marrying a poor man at last and trotting off to South America with him. I wonder if she 's sorry."

The five men hoped she was.

The girl who had seen Nancy shook her head emphatically.

"Sorry? Sorry? — why she 's maudlin, positively maudlin about Bobby and the baby."

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